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# THE BLEEDING WOUND !

[ BEING A MOST UP-TO-DATE COLLECTION OF GANDHIJI'S  
SPEECHES, WRITINGS AND STATEMENTS  
ON UNTOUCHABILITY ]

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To  
H. B. U.

the best disciple and follower  
of  
Gandhiji  
among my friends

Compiler.



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# Message from Gandhiji

(Specially received for this book)

*"The more I think about untouchability the more I feel that it is a deadly poison which not only corrupts Hindu Society but spreads its infection far beyond its pale. The sooner caste-Hindus wake up the better it would be for Hinduism and all those who have to come in contact with it."*

Yeravda Central Prison,

M. K. GANDHI.

November 25, 1932.

# Message From Sir P. C. Ray

(Specially received for this book)

*"Untouchability has been the curse of Hinduism. More than anything else, it has been the fruitful source of internal dissensions during the last thousand years or more—it has set brother against brother. To-day our unhappy country presents the humiliating spectacle of the Hindu arrayed against the Moslem; the Brahmin against the Non-Brahmin. Untouchability has been an indelible stain on Hinduism and a determined effort must be made to wipe it off. Thanks to Mahatma Gandhiji's heroic sacrifices—there has been a rude awakening throughout the length and breadth of this land and I trust the last nail is being driven to the coffin of this national stigma."*

College of Science,

Calcutta.

P. C. RAY

18-10-32

# BLESSINGS OF GURUJANS

## 1

( From the Private Secretary of Dr. Rabindranath Tagore )

*"Dr. Tagore has the deepest sympathy for your object which he simply hopes will be fulfilled. He wishes that your book may enjoy the appreciation and serious consideration which it richly deserves."*

Santiniketan.

25-10-32.

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## 2

( From the Private Secretary of Dr. Mrs. Besant )

*" . . . . . Her blessing is on every movement for the uplift of India, for which, as you say, she has worked for ever so many years."*

Madras.

13th Nov. 1932

## A WARNING !

"The 'spirit' of a movement is not only the emotion, the passion, the enthusiasm, behind it, inspiring it, warming it, but also the *Satya* in it, the light beside the heat. This *Satya*, this truth, is the *tattva*, the *principle*, the *reason* of it. Unless my reading of the papers is very careless, I do not see this *principle* being enunciated or emphasised by the leaders, anywhere. There is an enormous amount of emotional appeal of various kinds, which is all very good and very useful, at the moment, but which, as is generally the case where emotion is not supported by reason, is likely to provoke counter-emotions; *because* while human brotherhood is a fact, untouchability is also a fact, in nature. We must fix the material of emotion with the cement of reason. The passion of love ( - lust ) brings a new life of birth; the passion of anger ( - lust ) or disgust brings an existing life to death; but theoretical and practical reason, intelligent understanding of the relation of cause and effect and application of it, *maintains* life between birth and death. In Puranic technical terms, Brahma creates, Rudra destroys, but Vishnu preserves and carries on.

"The '*principle* which should govern the whole movement is that dirt, filth, *uncleanliness*, contagious disease, etc., is *untouchable*, and that any individual as such, or any caste-name, or nominal caste, as such, is *not* untouchable."

## INTRODUCTION.

Mr. Shri Ramnath Suman has done a great and opportune public service in bringing together Mahatma Gandhi's speeches and writings on the chronic, yet acute, problem of untouchability. There were great men before Mahatma Gandhi who were never tired of warning the Hindu community against this age-old evil, which is at once inhuman and suicidal. Among them all, the most prominent and the most distinguished was Mr. Justice Ranade of hallowed memory. There were organisations for the uplift of the Depressed Classes, and some individuals who devoted themselves to this cause more than to any other. Among them the late Mr. K. Rangarao of Manglore should always be mentioned with honour. The Theosophical Society under the leadership of Col. Olcott and Dr. Besant was also to the fore in the good work.

But it was left to Mahatma Gandhi to give this subject the foremost place in all nation-building acti-

vities. It is he, more than all others combined, who has made it a burning problem which, if not grappled with firmly and resolutely, may burn the community itself. It was no idle boast, his claim to be the principal spokesman of the Depressed Classes. He proved his sincerity and earnestness by his readiness to lay down life itself in this cause. To adapt and adopt the characteristic language of Carlyle, "The lumber of rags, old wood and nameless combustible rubbish ( for all is fuel to him ) was gathered from hucksters and of every description under Heaven." But 'the fire-pan, the kindling, the bitumen were his own.' Wherefore it is he, the Mahatma, and none other who could say with truth, 'The fire is *Mine*.'

In the utterances collected in the following pages Mahatma Gandhi comes to grips with the 'hydra-headed Monster' from every angle and at every point. 'The case against the ridiculous untouchability is complete and unanswerable. From the point of view of religion no Hindu can utter one word against the Mahatma's crusade against the gignatic evil who does not deny the Authority of Sri Krishna as God Incarnate on earth. In the Bhagvad Gita, which is the

essence of all the Upanishads, Sri Krishna says in the chapter on Karma-Samnyas Yoga:

विद्याविनयसम्पन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि

शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः ॥ १८

[ In a Brahmana endued with wisdom and humility, in a cow, in an elephant, as also in a dog and in a dog-eater (a Chandala) the wise see the same. ]

It is no wonder that few are the men who can live a life of practical appreciation of this grand truth. Those who do are the chosen of God Himself. The following verse from the same chapter of the Gita, which I have always thought applies to Mahatma Gandhi more perhaps than to any other known man, certainly almost alone among public-men, should satisfy every one that of the elect is our revered Mahatma:

ज्ञेयः स नित्यसंन्यासी यो न द्वेष्टि न काङ्क्षति ।

निर्द्वन्द्वो हि महाबाहो सुखं बन्धात् प्रमुच्यते ॥ ३ ॥

[ He should be known as a perpetual renouncer who neither hates nor desires; for, free from the pairs of opposites, O Mighty-Armed, he is easily set free from bondage, ]

The compiler and publishers of this volume, not rich or ambitious men but earnest public workers and devoted admirers of our greatest and most revered countryman, have done a great public service by



placing within reach of the man in the street the most important utterances. They could ask for no higher reward than that many might read this book and thereby roused to a sense of shame at the existence of this huge blot on Hindu society and provoked into prompt and courageous action to give effect to the conviction which every word of the following pages breathes. They deserve such reward; I hope it will be theirs.

Allahabad  
Nov. 24, 32.

C. Y. CHINTAMANI.



## Foreword

It is hardly relevant to analyse how and when untouchability came into existence in this country. More relevant and of more practical value is to know that this curse on Hinduism or if I may say so, on humanity, is to be eradicated soon, root and branch. And who can deny the fact that no man has done more to eradicate this evil than Gandhiji.

The woes and miseries of the so-called depressed classes are not easy of realization except by those who have the misfortune to suffer them. And yet Gandhiji while born of twice-borns not only realizes but actually suffers their miseries more than his own.

For a man of Gandhiji's character, who feels every moment in tune with the universe there is nothing strange in it.

The present book is a collection of some of his writings and speeches. Lofty as they are they require no introduction.

If this book can melt the hearts of those who so far have abstained from taking a sympathetic attitude towards the uplift of the Harijans, the labour expended on its compilation and publication will have well served the purpose. I hope the public and specially those who are taking keen interest in the uplift of Harijans will patronize this book.

My hearty congratulations to the compiler.

GHANSHYAM DAS BIRLA

## PREFACE

The Great Fast came unawares and struck hard the sleeping Hindu conscience suddenly. The sacred vow, that seemed so unpractical to some publicmen, caused tremendous awakening and bore most practical results. Those who were sceptical in the beginning witnessed, in less than a week, with awful surprise, the opening of Hindu heart, the rising of the spirit - the *Sat* - of Hindnism, breaking chains, shattering prejudices, smashing superstitions and creating records.

The demon that defied our reformers for ages, the demon that laughed with scorn at all our attempts to meet him quarely, the demon that crushed, degraded and paraded us in foreign markets in the 'best sellers' of Mayos, has been cornered and captured at last. Gandhiji did it in his own original way.

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The temples, once 'fairer than lilies poured over by the rising Sun', the temples that once gave solace and peace to many an anguished heart, the temples that gave shelter to down-trodden and hope to downhearted warming them with a glow, a light, a longing for Eternal, have become convenient centres of 'touch-me-notism' and separatism, and, therefore, polluted and unholy. The temples sanctified and consecrated with the spirit of the Lord once sent out the pilgrims, awakened to their souls, have become the drudgery of our social life, multiplying factors of disintegration.

We have forgotten that anything that separates or disintegrates is unholy and unreal and that which unites and enlarges only is real. *Religion* never impedes flight of the Soul. The faith is not the blind following, yielding to superstitions. The Faith is the liberalising of human heart and 'Certitude born of the Soul's secret communion with Truth.' It never lulls the man into mental inaction or slavery. Therefore all that separates, cuts at the root, is to be discarded as irreligious and unmoral.

This 'touch-me-notism', superimposed upon Hinduism, strikes at the very root of the spirit that sustains Hinduism. To say that Hinduism, which once discovered the Universality of Spirit, the Oneness of Soul, the doctrine of One in All and All in One, sanctions Untouchability of any sort, is to deny and undo the very Truth, meditated upon and realised by the great Seers. One who suggests such a thing is badly in need of a reliable doctor.

In fact Untouchability is not only against the true spirit of religion but is offensive to our sense of honour, a challenge to our Manhood, to all that is worthy and noble in human character. It perpetuates inequality and injustice and excites the sinful and vainglorious aspect in man; it sets man against man and divides the Humanity and human relationships, into water-tight compartments. It mercilessly dissects the Whole, cuts the Man into pieces, throws dirt and filth over conscience and creates false values and ideas in human society.

Untouchability not only unjustifies its existence from Hindu religious and social point of view but is unjustifiable from the point of future reorganisation and proper adjustment of various social units, as it mars the growth of *rationale* in man.

The Fast has released tremendous energy. It has set the whole fabric in motion. The energy is being utilised in thousand and one ways to eradicate the evil, root and branch. But great forces require expert guidance. Energy, set in motion, works both ways. It may create a noble record, but it *can* also create bad and undesirable results. All depends upon the quality of direction and guidance it receives. And since there exists no better man fit for the task than Gandhiji, the father of this, perhaps, 'the greatest religious movement in world history', I felt it advisable and worthy of attempt to compile his writings and speeches on Untouchability for the proper guidance of public zeal and energy.

I must remind my readers, and the public at large, that "the spirit of a movement is not only the emotion, the passion, the enthusiasm behind it, but also the *Satya* in it, the light beside the heat. This *Satya*, this truth, in the *tattva*, the principle, the reason of it. We must fix the material of emotion with the cement of reason." 1

Reason and emotion both run side by side in these writings and speeches of Gandhiji. He has dealt with almost every aspect of the question. I hope, therefore, with confidence that his writings will not only inspire the common folk to action but will also guide the workers in right direction.

'Despise not the Untouchables,' cries aloud the Hindu conscience to-day. Hear the voice of Reason and despise them not. The Untouchability is a curse and smells hatred; it poisons and strangles the glorious heritage of Man. Untouchables have a great claim. Theirs is the labour of love and where labour is despised, the result is stagnation, decay and death.

I appeal to caste Hindus, therefore, in the name of religion, in the name of humanity, to rise above the petty squabbles. I appeal to them to feel how inhuman and unworthy it is to keep the Harijans -

*In cloths as coffins, homes as graves*

and all this in the name of religion ! I appeal to them specially to my sisters, to rise to the occasion and lead the tattered Hindu society to a healthy and growing organism full of life and vitality.

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My thanks are due to Mr. Ghanshyam Das Birla, the worthy President of All India Anti-Touchability League, who has kindly written the Foreword. I am specially indebted, and can not express in words how grateful I am, to Mr. C. Y. Chintamani, the veteran journalist and Liberal leader, who gladly accepted my invitation to write the introduction and sent it in time, though pressed with heavy work, both in Council and out at home. Again I would be unworthy if I did not express, my gratefulness to that inspiring figure and worthy son of India, the great scientist, Sir P. C. Ray ( D. Sc., C. I. E. ) who kindly sent a special message for the book at a very short notice, and to Syt. Rabindranath Tagore, the Poet, and Dr. Mrs. Annie Besant who blessed my humble effort. To give thanks to Bapu, who kindly sent a special message, is to belittle his fatherly kindness, which has given me so much solace and peace during the most troubled hours of my life.

Ajmer  
Dec. 1. 1932

SHRI RAMNATH SUMAN

THE  
**Bleeding Wound!**

[Being a most up-to-date collection of Gandhiji's  
speeches and writings on Untouchability.]



MAHATMA GANDHI



"Untouchability can not be given a secondary place on the programme. Without the removal of the taint Swaraj is a meaningless term. Workers should welcome social boycott and even public execration in the prosecution of their work. I consider the removal of untouchability as a most powerful factor in the process of attainment of Swaraj".

GANDHI

## The Impassable Barrier

The existence of the untouchability must remain an impassable barrier in the path of our progress, which we must break down with supreme effort. There seems to be lurking thought with many of us, that we can gain Swaraj and keep untouchability. They do not even see the contradiction inherent in the thought. Swaraj is as much for the 'untouchable' as for the 'touchable'. A correspondent from Narayanavaram writes; "In our parts Panchams are very badly treated by the Hindus, especially the Brahmans. In the villages they are not allowed to go about the streets inhabited by Brahmans. They must stand at a considerable distance when speaking to Brahmans." Read Sahebs for Brahmans and Indians for Panchams and see how you feel. And yet I have no doubt, that some Sahebs are infinitely better than some Brahmans. *God will not let us have Swaraj so long as we treat a brother as an outcaste by the reason of his birth.* A man's karma is responsible for what he is, they say. But my

*karma* does not compel me to throw stones at a sinner. Religion is made to uplift and not to keep a man crushed under the weight of his *karma*. It is the prostitution of the grand doctrine of *karma* to consign a man of lowly birth to perdition. Rama felt privileged to find himself honoured by a fisherman. The Hindu religion is replete with illustrations of great men lifting their unfortunate brethren from their miseries. Will not the modern Hindus copy their own great men, and once for all rub out the blot of untouchability that so defiles Hinduism?

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## If I Should be Born Again—

I do not know how I am to convince those who oppose the reform, of the wrong position they have taken. How am I to plead with those who regard any contact with the members of the oppressed community as entailing defilement of which they cannot be cleansed without necessary ablutions, and who thus regard omission to perform the ablutions a sin? I can only lay before them my innermost convictions.

*I regard untouchability as the greatest blot on Hinduism.* This idea was not brought home to me by my bitter<sup>est</sup> experiences during the S. African struggle. It is not due to the fact that I was once an agnostic. It is equally wrong to think, as some people do, that I have taken my views from my study of Christian religious literature. These views date as far back as the time when I was neither enamoured of, nor was acquainted with, the Bible or the followers of the Bible.

## The Bleeding Wound

I was hardly yet twelve when this idea dawned on me. A scavenger named Uka, an untouchable, used to attend our house for clearing latrines. Often I would ask my mother why it was wrong to touch him, why I was forbidden to touch him. If I accidentally touched Uka, I was asked to perform the ablutions, and though I naturally obeyed, it was not without smiling protesting that untouchability was not sanctioned by religion, that it was impossible that it should be so. I was a very dutiful and obedient child and so far as it was consistent with respect for parents, I often had tussles with them on the matter. I told my mother that she was entirely wrong in considering physical contact with Uka as sinful.

While at school I would often happen to touch the "untouchables", and as I never would conceal the fact from my parents, my mother would tell me that the shortest cut to purification after the unholy touch was to cancel the touch by touching any Mussalman passing by. As a sign of simply out of reverence and regard for my mother I often did so, but never did so believing

it to be a religious obligation. After some time we shifted to Porebander, where I made my first acquaintance with Sanskrit. I was not yet put to an English school, and my brother and I were placed in charge of a Brahman, who taught us *Ramraksha* and *Vishnu Punjar*. The texts "*jale Vishnuh sthale Vishnuh*"—जले विष्णुः स्थले विष्णुः (there is the Lord (present) in water, there is the Lord (present) in earth) have never gone out of my memory. A motherly old dame used to live close by. Now it happened that I was very timid then, and would conjure up ghosts and goblins whenever the lights went out, and it was dark. The old mother, to disabuse me of fears, suggested that I should mutter the *Ramraksha* texts whenever I was afraid, and all evil spirits would fly away. This I did and, as I thought, with good effect. I could never believe then that there was any text in the *Ramraksha* pointing to the contact of the 'untouchables' as a sin. I did not understand its meaning then or understood it very imperfectly. But I was confident that *Ramraksha*, which could destroy all fear of ghosts, could not be countenancing any such

thing as fear of contact with the 'untouchables'.

The *Ramayana* used to be regularly read in our family. A Brahmin called Ladha Maharaj used to read it. He was stricken with leprosy, and he was confident that a regular reading of the *Ramayana* would cure him of leprosy, and, indeed, he was cured of it. 'How can the *Ramayana*,' I thought to myself, 'in which one who is regarded now-a-days as an untouchable took Rama across the Ganges in his boat, countenance the idea of any human beings being untouchable on the ground that they were polluted souls?' *The fact that we addressed God as the 'purifier of the polluted' and by similar appellations, shows that it is a sin to regard any one born in Hinduism as polluted or untouchable—that it is satanic to do so.* I have hence been never tired of repeating that it is a great sin. I do not pretend that this thing had crystalised as a conviction in me at the age of twelve, but I do say that I did then regard untouchability as a sin. I narrate this story for the information of the Vaishnavas and orthodox Hindus.

I have always claimed to be a Sānatān Hindu. It is not that I am quite innocent of the scriptures.<sup>ॐ नमः</sup> I am not a profound scholar of Sanskrit. I have read the Vedas and the Upanishads only in translations. Naturally therefore, mine is not a scholarly study of them. My knowledge of them is in no way profound, but I have studied them as I should do as a Hindu and I claim to have grasped their true spirit. By the time I had reached the age of 21, I had studied other religions also.

There was a time when I was wavering<sup>चिन्तितः</sup> between Hinduism and Christianity. when I recovered my balance of mind, I felt that to me salvation<sup>मोक्ष</sup> was possible only through the Hindu religion and my faith in Hinduism grew deeper and more enlightened.<sup>विवर्धितः</sup>

*But even then I believed that untouchability was no part of Hinduism ; and that, if it was, such Hinduism was not for me.*

True, Hinduism does not regard untouchability as a sin. I do not want to enter into any controversy regarding the interpretation of the



shastras. It might be difficult for me to establish my point by quoting authorities from the Bhagwat or Manusmriti. But I claim to have understood the spirit of Hinduism. *Hinduism has sinned in giving sanction to untouchability. It has degraded us, made us the pariahs of the Empire.* Even the Mussalmans caught the sinful contagion from us; and in S. Africa, in E. Africa and in Canada, the Mussalmans no less than Hindus came to be regarded as pariahs. All this evil has resulted from the sin of untouchability.

I may here recall my proposition, which is this : *So long as the Hindus wilfully regard untouchability as part of their religion, so long as the mass of Hindus consider it a sin to touch a section of their brethren, Swaraj is impossible of attainment.* Yudhishtira would not enter heaven without his dog. How can, then, the descendants of that Yudhishtira expect to obtain Swaraj without the untouchables ? What crimes, for which we condemn the Government as satanic, have not we been guilty of towards our untouchable brethren ?

We are guilty of having suppressed our brethren; we make them <sup>चलाना</sup> crawl on their bellies, we have made them rub their noses on the ground; with eyes red with rage, we push them out of railway compartments—what more than this has British Rule done? What charge, that we bring against Dyer, and O'Dwyer, may not others, and even our own people, lay at our doors? We ought to <sup>स्वयं स्वयं</sup> purge ourselves of this pollution. It is idle to talk of Swaraj so long as we do not protect the weak and the helpless, or so long as it is possible for a single Swarajist to injure the feelings of any individual. Swaraj means that not a single Hindu or Muslim shall for a moment arrogantly think that he can crush with impunity meek Hindus or Muslims. Unless this condition is fulfilled, we will gain Swaraj only to lose it the next moment. We are no better than the brutes until we have <sup>स्वयं स्वयं</sup> purged ourselves of the sins we have committed, against our weaker brethren.

But I have faith in me still. In the course of my peregrinations in India, I have realised that the spirit of kindness of which the Poet

Tulsidas sings so eloquently, which forms the corner-stone of the Jain and Vaishnava religions, which is the quintessence of the Bhagavat and which every verse of the Gita is saturated with—this kindness, this love, this charity, is slowly but steadily gaining ground in the hearts of the masses of this country.

Many a fracas between Hindus and Mussalmans is still heard of. There are still many of these who do not scruple to wrong one another. But as to the net result, I feel that kindness and charity have increased. The Hindus and Mohamedans have become God-fearing. We have shaken ourselves free from the hypnotism of law-courts and Govt. schools, and no longer labour under many another hallucination. I have also realized that those whom we regard as illiterate and ignorant are the very people who deserve to be called educated. They are more cultured than we, their lives are more righteous than ours. A little study of the present-day mentality of the people will show *that according to the popular conception Swaraj is synonymous with Ram Raj—the establishment of the Kingdom of Righteousness on earth.*

### If I Should be Born Again—

If it can bring any comfort to you, my untouchable brethern, I would say that your question does not cause so much stir as it used to do formerly. That does not mean that I expect you to cease to have misgivings about the Hindus. How can they deserve to be not mistrusted having wronged you so much? Swami Vivekanand used to say that the untouchables were not depressed, they were suppressed by the the Hindus who in turn had suppressed themselves by suppressing them.

I suppose I was at Nellore on the 6th of April. I met the untouchables there and I prayed that day as I have done to-day. I do want to attain Moksha. I do not want to be reborn. *But if I have to be reborn, I should be born an untouchable, so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings, and the affronts levelled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from that miserable condition. I therefore, prayed that, if I should be born again, I should do so not as a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, or Shudra, but as an Atishudra.*

To-day is much more solemn than the sixth. It is hallowed by the memory of the massacre of thousands of innocents. And I prayed, therefore, also to-day that if I should die with any of my desires unfructified, with my service of the untouchables unfinished, with my Hinduism unfulfilled, I may be born again amongst the untouchables to bring my Hinduism to its fulfilment.

I love scavengering. In my Ashram, an eighteen year old Brahmin lad is doing the scavenger's work in order to teach the Ashram scavenger cleanliness. The lad is no reformer. He was born and bred in orthodoxy. He is a regular reader of the Gita and faithfully performs Sandhyavandana. His pronunciation of Sanskrit verses is more faultless than mine. When he conducts the prayer, his soft sweet melodies melt one into love. But he felt that his accomplishments were incomplete until he had become also a perfect sweeper, and that if he wanted the Ashram sweeper to do his work well, he must do it himself and set an example.

You should realize that you are cleaning

### If I Should be Born Again—

Hindu society: You have therefore to purify your lives: You should cultivate the habits of cleanliness, so that no one may point his finger at you. Use alkaliash or earth, if you cannot afford to use soap, to keep yourselves clean. Some of you are given to drinking and gambling which you must get rid of. You will point your finger at the Brahmins and say even they are given to these vices. But they are not looked upon as polluted; and you are. You must not ask the Hindus to emancipate you as a matter of favour. Hindus must do so, if they want, in their own interests. You should, therefore, make them feel ashamed by your own purity and cleanliness. I believe that we shall have purified ourselves within the next five months. If my expectations are not fulfilled, I will think that, although my proposition was fundamentally correct, yet I was wrong in my calculation; and I will again say that I had erred in my calculation.

You claim to be Hindus; you read the Bhagavat; if, therefore, the Hindus oppress you, then you should understand that the fault does

not lie in the Hindu Religion but in those who profess it. In order to emancipate yourselves, you shall have to purify yourselves. You shall have to get rid of evil habits like drinking.

I have come in contact with the untouchables all over the country ; and I have observed that immense possibilities lie latent in them of which neither they nor the rest of the Hindus seem to be aware. *Their intellect is of virginal purity.* I ask you to learn spinning and weaving, and if you take them up as a profession, you will keep poverty from your doors. As regards your attitude towards the Bhangis, I will repeat what I said at Godhra. I cannot understand why you should yourselves countenance the distinction between Dheds and Bhangis. There is no difference between them. Even in normal times their occupation is as honourable as that of lawyers or Government servants.

You should now cease to accept leavings from plates however clean they may be represented to be. Receive grain only—good, sound grain, not rotten grain, and that too only if it is

courteously offered. If you are able to do all I have asked you to do, you will secure your emancipation, not in four or five months, but in so many days.

The Hindus are not sinful by nature ; they are sunk in ignorance. Untouchability must be extinct in this very year. *Two of the strongest desires that keep me in flesh and bone are the emancipation of the untouchables and the protection of the cow.* When these two desires are fulfilled, there is Swaraj, and therein lies my own Moksha. May god give you strength to work out your salvation.\*

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\*Taken from the Presidential speech, delivered at the Suppressed Classes Conference, held in Ahmedabad, on the 13th and 14th April, 1921.



## Untouchability and its Implications

[The following is a free rendering of Mr. Gandhi's speech at the Untouchability Conference, held at Belgaum, during the Congress week in 1924.—Editor.]

“ Friends, It was hardly necessary to ask me to express my views on the subject of Untouchability. I have declared times without number from various public platforms that it is the prayer of my heart that if I should fail to obtain *moksha* in this very birth I might be born a Bhangi in my next. I believe in *Varnashram* both according to birth and to Karma. But I do not regard *Bhangis* as in any sense a low order. On the contrary I know many *Bhangis* who are worthy of reverence. On the other hand there are Brahmins going about whom it would be very difficult to regard with any reverence. Holding these views, therefore, if there is a rebirth in store for me, I wish to be born a pariah in the midst of pariahs, because thereby I would be able to render more effective service to them and also be in a better position to plead with other communities on their behalf.

But just as I do not want the so-called touchables to despise the untouchables, so also I do not want the latter to entertain any feeling of hatred and ill-will towards the former. I do not want them to wrest their rights by violence as is done in the West. The trend of world opinion is against such violence. I can clearly see a time coming in the world when it will be impossible to secure rights by arbitrament of force, so I tell my untouchable bretheren to-day as I tell the Government, that if they resort to force for the attainment of their purpose they shall certainly fail.

I want to uplift Hinduism. I regard the untouchables as an integral part of the Hindu community. I am pained when I see a single Bhangi driven out of the fold of Hinduism. But I do not believe that all class distinctions can be obliterated. I believe in the doctrine of equality as taught by Lord Krishna in the Gita. The Gita teaches us that members of all the four castes should be treated on an equal basis. It does not prescribe the same *Dharma* for the Brahmin as for the Bhangi. , But it insists that

## The Bleeding Wound

the latter shall be entitled to the same measure of consideration and esteem as the former with all his superior learning. It is therefore our duty to see that the untouchables do not feel that they are despised or looked down upon. Let them not be offered leavings from our plates for their subsistence. How can I accord differential treatment to any person, be he Brahmin or Bhangi, who worships the same God and keeps his body and soul pure and clean? I for one would regard myself as having sinned if I gave to a Bhangi unclean food from the leavings from the kitchen or failed to render him personal assistance when he was in need.

Let me make my position absolutely clear. While I do hold that the institution of Untouchability as it stands to-day has no sanction in Hinduism, Hinduism does recognise 'untouchability' in a limited sense and under certain circumstances. For instance, every time that my mother handled unclean things she became untouchable for the time being and had to cleanse herself by bathing. As a Vaishnava I *refuse to believe that any one can be regarded*

*untouchable by reason of his or her birth*, and such untouchability as is recognised by religion is by its very nature transitory,—easily removable and referable to the deed, not the doer. Not only that. Just as we revere our mother for the sanitary service that she renders us when we are infants, and the greater her service the greater is our reverence for her ; similarly the Bhangis are entitled to our highest reverence for the sanitary service they perform for society.

Now another point. I do not regard inter-dining and inter-marriage as essential to the removal of Untouchability. I believe in *Varnashram Dharma*. But I eat with Bhangis. I do not know whether I am a Sannyasi, for I seriously doubt whether in this Kaliyuga it is at all possible for any one to fulfil the conditions prescribed for a Sannyasi. But I am moving deliberately in the direction of Sannyasa. It is, therefore, not only not necessary for me to observe restrictions but their observance may be even harmful for me. As regards the question of inter-marriage, it does not arise in cases

like mine. Sufficient for me to say that my scheme does not include inter-marriage. Let me tell you that in my own clan all the members do not interdine. In certain cases among our Vaishnava families they do not use each other's utensils or even cook food on fire fetched from others' kitchens. You may call this practice superstitious, but I do not regard it as such. It certainly does no harm to Hinduism. In my Ashram, Dudhabhai, one of the 'untouchable' inmates, dines with the rest without any distinction. But I do not recommend anybody outside the Ashram to follow the example. Again, you know the esteem in which I hold Malaviyaji. I would wash his feet. But he would not take food touched by me. Am I to resent it as a mark of contempt? Certainly not, because I know that no contempt is meant.

The religion to which I belong prescribes for our observance *Maryada Dharma*. The Rishis of old carried on exhaustive researches through meditation, and as the result of the researches they discovered some great truths, such as have no parallel perhaps in any other religion. One

of these was that they regarded certain kinds of foods as injurious for the spiritual well-being of man. So they interdicted their use. Now suppose some one had to travel abroad and live among strange people with different customs and standards as regard their diet. Knowing as they did how compelling sometimes the force of social customs of the people among whom men lived was, they promulgated *Maryada Dharma* to help one in such emergencies. Though, however, I believe in *Maryada Dharma*, I do not regard it as essential part of Hinduism. I can even conceive a time when these restrictions might be abolished with impunity. But the reform contemplated in the untouchability <sup>302/1/1</sup> movement does not obliterate the restriction as the inter-dining and inter-marrying. I can not recommend wholesale abolition of these restrictions to the public, even at the risk of being charged with hypocrisy and inconsistency. For instance, I let my son dine freely in Musalman households because I believe he can take sufficient care as to what to take and what not to take. I myself

have no scruples in taking my food in Musselman households because I have my own strict rules about my diet. Let me tell you of an incident that happened at Aligarh. Swami Satyadeva and I were Khwaja Saheb's guests. Swami Satyadeva did not share my views. We argued about them. I told him that holding the views I did, it would be as wrong of me to refuse to partake of the food offered by a Musalman as it would be on his part to transgress his Maryada. So Swami Satyadeva was provided with separate cooking arrangements. Similarly when I was Bari Saheb's guest he provided us with a Brahmin cook with strict instructions to obtain all the ration for us fresh from the bazaar. When asked why he put himself to such inconvenience he explained that he did so because he wanted to avoid the slightest possibility of suspicion on the part of the public that he entertained any secret designs of proselytisation against me or my companions. That single incident raised Bari Saheb in my esteem.

I have dwelt on this point at such great length, because I want to be absolutely plain with you

(untouchables).. I do not want to employ diplomacy in my dealings with you or for that matter with any one. I do not want to keep you under any false ~~illusion~~ <sup>illusion</sup> or win your support by holding out temptations. I want to remove untouchability because its removal is essential for Swaraj, and I want Swaraj. But I would not exploit you for gaining any political ends of mine. The issue with me is even bigger than Swaraj. I am anxious to see an end put to Untouchability because for me it is an expiation and a penance. It is not the untouchables whose Shuddhi I effect—the thing would be absurd—but my own and that of the Hindu religion. Hinduism has committed a great sin in giving sanction to this evil and I am anxious—if such a thing as vicarious penance is possible—to purify it of that sin by expiating for it in my own person.

That being so, it follows that the only means open to me for my purpose are those of Ahimsa and Truth. I have adopted an untouchable child as my own. ~~Triloke Prasad~~ I confess I have not been able to convert my wife completely to my view. She can not bring to love her as I do. But I can



## The Bleeding Wound

not convert my wife by anger; I can do so only by love. If any of my people have done you any wrong, I ask your forgiveness for it. Some members of the untouchable class said when I was at Poona that they would resort to force if the Hindus did not alter their attitude towards them. Can untouchability be removed by force? Can the amelioration of the untouchables come through these methods? The only way by which you and I can <sup>take away</sup> ~~ween~~ orthodox Hindus from their bigotry is by patient argument and correct conduct. So long as they are not converted, I can only ask you to put up with your lot with patience. I am willing to stand by you and share your sufferings with you. You must have the right of worship in any temple in which members of other castes are admitted. *You must have admission to schools along with the children of other castes without any distinction. You must be eligible to the highest office in the land not excluding even that of the Viceroy's. That is my definition of the removal of Untouchability.*

## Untouchability and its Implications

But I can help you in this only by following the way indicated by my religion and not by following Western methods. For that way I can not save Hinduism. Yours is a sacred cause. Can one serve a sacred cause by adopting Satan's methods? I pray you, therefore, to dismiss from your mind the idea of ameliorating your condition by brute force. The Gita tells us that by sincerely meditating on Him in one's heart, one can attain Moksh. Meditation is waiting on God. If waiting on God brings the highest bliss of salvation, how much quicker must it bring removal of Untouchability? Waiting on God means increasing purity. Let us by prayer purify ourselves and we shall not only remove Untouchability but shall also hasten the advent of Swaraj.

## The Hydra-Headed Monster

A friend has sent me a gist of what appears in the Southern vernacular press from the pen of a learned Pundit. He summarises the Pundit's plea for untouchability in this fashion:

(1) "The fact that once Adi-Shankara asked a *Chandala* to be aloof from him, and the fact that Trishanku when he was condemned to be a *Chandala* was shunned by all people, prove that untouchability is not of recent growth.

(2) "The *Chandalas* are the outcastes of the Aryan society.

(3) "The untouchables themselves are not free from the sin of untouchability.

(4) "The untouchables are so because they kill animals and because they have constantly to do with flesh, blood, bones and night-soil.

(5) "The untouchables must be isolated even as slaughterhouses, toddy-shops and houses of ill-fame are or should be.

(6) "It should be enough that untouchables are not denied the privileges of the other world.

(7) "A Gandhi may touch these people, but so can he fast. We may neither fast nor touch the untouchables.

(8) "Untouchability is a necessity for man's growth.

(9) "Man has magnetic powers about him. This *sakti* is like milk. It will be damaged by improper contacts. If one can keep musk and onion together one may mix Brahmans and untouchables."

These are the chief points summarised by the correspondent. Untouchability is a hydra-headed monster. It is therefore necessary, each time the monster lifts its head, to deal with it. The stories told in the Puranas are some of them most dangerous, if we do not know their bearing on the present conditions. The Shastras would be death-traps if we were to regulate our conduct according to every detail given in them or according to that of the characters therein described. They help us only to define and

argue out fundamental principles. If some well-known character in religious books sinned against God or man, is that a warrant for our repeating the sin? *It is enough for us to be told, once for all, Truth is the only thing that matters in the world, that Truth is God.* It is irrelevant to be told that even Yudhishtira was betrayed into an untruth. It is more relevant for us to know that when he spoke an untruth, he had to suffer for it that very moment and that his great name in no way protected him from punishment. Similarly, it is irrelevant for us to be told that Adi-Shankara avoided a *Chandala*. It is enough for us to know that a religion that teaches us to treat all that lives as we treat ourselves, cannot possibly countenance the inhuman treatment of a single creature, let alone a whole class of perfectly innocent human beings. Moreover we have not even all the facts before us to judge what Adi-Shankara did or did not do. Still less, do we know the meaning of the word '*Chandala*' where it occurs. It has admittedly many meanings, one of which is a sinner. But, if all sinners are to be regarded as untouchables, it is

very much to be feared that we should all, not excluding the Pundit himself, be under the ban of untouchability. That untouchability is an old institution, nobody has ever denied. But, if it is an evil, it cannot be defended on the ground of its antiquity.

If the untouchables are the outcastes of the Aryan society, so much the worse for that society. And, if the Aryans at some stage in their progress regarded a certain class of people as outcastes by way of punishment, there is no reason why that punishment should descend upon their progeny irrespective of the causes for which their ancestors were punished.

That their is untouchability even amongst untouchables merely demonstrates that evil can not be confined and that its deadening effect is all-pervading. The existence of untouchability amongst untouchables is an additional reason for cultured Hindu society to rid itself of the curse with the quickest despatch.

If the untouchables are so because they kill animals and because they have to do with flesh,

blood, bones and night-soil, every nurse and every doctor should become an untouchable and so should Christians, Mussalmans and all so-called high-class Hindus who kill animals for food or sacrifice.

The argument that because slaughter-house, toddy-shops, and houses of ill-fame are or should be isolated, untouchables should likewise be isolated betrays gross prejudice. Slaughter-houses and toddy-shops are and should be isolated. But, neither butchers nor publicans are isolated. Prostitutes should be isolated because their occupation is revolting and detrimental to the well-being of society. Whereas the occupation of 'untouchables' is not only desirable but a necessity for the well-being of the society.

To say that 'untouchables' are not denied privileges of the other world is the acme of insolence. If it was possible to deny them the other world, it is highly likely that the defenders of the monster would isolate them even in the other world.

It is throwing dust in the eyes of the people to say that 'a Gandhi may touch the 'untouchables,' not so other people,' as if the touching and service of 'untouchables' was so injurious as to require for it men specially proof against untouchable germs. Heaven only knows what punishment is in store for Mussalmans, Christians and others who do not believe in untouchability !

The plea of animal magnetism is altogether overdone. The high class men are not all sweet-smelling like musk, nor are untouchables foul-smelling like onion. There are thousands of untouchables who are any day infinitely superior to the so-called high class people.

It is painful to discover that even after five years of continuous propaganda against untouchability, there are learned people enough found to support such an immoral and evil custom. That belief in untouchability can co-exist with learning in the same person, adds no status to untouchability but makes one despair of mere learning being any aid to character or sanity.



## Essentially a Reformer

(What looked apparently a small unimportant function was the occasion of a remarkable speech by Gandhiji in Ahmedabad on the 2nd August 1931. Readers will remember that mainly at the instance of Seth Jammalal Bajaj, Sir Chinubhai Madhavlal and his mother gave a promise to Gandhiji to throw open the doors of the family temple at Ahmedabad to the so-called untouchable Hindus. Jammalaji anxious to see the promise made to him redeemed and add one more free temple to his credit, saw Sir Chinubhai and insisted on the good thing being done whilst Gandhiji was in Ahmedabad. So the thing was fixed up on the second of August, and the temple as well as the well attached to it, were declared by Gandhiji to be open for the use of the so-called 'untouchables' as of the other Hindus. A casual remark in Sir Chinubhai's speech to the effect that whilst Gandhiji was pre-occupied with things of great political importance, he should not have been asked to find time for a comparatively small thing, drew from Gandhiji a speech which threw a flood of light on Gandhiji's way of looking at things and made an aspect of his life clearer than ever before. A condensed summary of the speech is given here, —M. D.)

### A Confession.

I must say that the service of the so-called "untouchables" does not rank with me as in any way subordinate to any kind of political work. Just a moment ago I met two missionary friends who drew the same distinction and therefore came in for some gentle rebuke from me. I suggested

to them that my work of social reform was in no way less than or subordinate to political work. The fact is, that when I saw that to a certain extent my social work would be impossible without the help of political work, I took to the latter and only to the extent that it helped the former. I must, therefore, confess that work of social reform or self-purification of this nature is a hundred times dearer to me than what is called purely political work.

### Service of the 'Untouchables'

For what does service of the 'untouchables' or rendering justice to them mean? It means nothing less than redeeming a debt which is centuries overdue, and to expiate in some measure the sin we have been guilty of for ages, viz., that of oppressing and insulting our own kith and kin. We have behaved towards these unfortunate brethren of ours nothing better than a man turned monster behaves towards brother man. And the programme of the removal of untouchability that we have set before us is just some little

expiation for a monstrous wrong. And as it is essentially by way of expiation or self-purification, it can not be prompted by any fear or favour. If we take up this work, fearing that the so-called untouchables would go over to another faith, or that they would wreak vengeance on us, or as a sort of political trumpcard, we shall have betrayed our ignorance of Hinduism and our ungratefulness to those who have served us for ages. I admit that it was I who pushed the item to the fore-front of the Congress programme, and any one bent on cavilling at me might say that it was a clever bait held out by me to the untouchables. Let me say at-once that that charge is idle. It grew on me very early in life that those who believed themselves to be Hindus must perform the penance in the shape of wiping out this stain before they could be proud of Hinduism, and as the majority of Congressmen were Hindus, and as the programme then put before the nation was not one of self-purification, I put it in fore-front of the Congress programme, in the conviction that unless the Hindus were

prepared to wipe out this stain they could not regard themselves as fit for Swaraj. That conviction has come upon me as a self-evident proposition. If you came into power, with the stain of untouchability unaffected, I am positive that the untouchables would be far worse under that 'Swaraj' than they are now, for the simple reason that our weaknesses and our failings would then be buttressed up by the accession of power. That in brief is my position, and I have always held that this self-purification is an indispensable condition of Swaraj. It is not a position that I have arrived at to-day. It is as old as when I began to think of Swaraj. that is why I thank God for enabling me to participate in this function to-day. I have always prized opportunities for doing this kind of work, and have often put aside so-called political work for work of this nature. I know that those to whom only the exciting thing called "politics" has an exclusive appeal will laugh at this kind of thing. But for me it is nearest and dearest to my heart.

### When the Test comes

As for you, Lady Chinubhai, you need no congratulations from me for having done what was an abvious duty and an act of self-purification. But the occasion for my congratulations may, for aught we can say, soon arise. The Brahman priests in this temple have reconciled themselves to-day to the position. But it is possible that they may one day turn against you and say that they would have nothing to do with worship in your temple. Indeed the whole Brahman community, the whole of the orthodox Nagar community may conspire against you. Even then I hope and pray that you will hold fast to your conviction and rejoice in the belief that that day the stone image of Shiva in the temple is invested with the living presence of God. That will be acme of your penance, and the day you are excommunicated by your community for having dared to do this necessary act of self-purification, I shall congratulate you most heartily.

### To the Hindus

Let those who are present here to-day understand that we have not been able yet

to win Swaraj because of the load of the sin that we are still carrying on our backs. If all the so-called 'touchable' Hindus did real penance for having wronged their 'untouchable' bretheren, Swaraj would be automatically in our hands. *And pray understand mere removal of physical untouchability does not mean expiation.* The removal of untouchability means the removal of all distinctions of superiority and inferiority attaching to birth. Varna-shramdharma is a beautiful institution, but if it is used to buttress up social superiority of one section over another, it will be a monstrosity. Let removal of untouchability result from a living conviction that all are one in the eyes of God, that the Father in Heaven will deal with us all with even-handed justice.

This is a private temple, but if the doors of this private temple are thrown open to the 'untouchables' how long will the doors of public temples here remain closed? Let to-day's function be an eye-opener to all the Hindus. Let this be the auspicious beginning of a process which will end in throwing open all the

Hindu temples to the 'untouchables.' But even there as in every other thing I should ask you to avoid compulsion. Untouchability can not long endure. Some years ago we obstinately clung to it, to-day we are indifferent. It will be a thing of the past only when the indifference is translated into a conscious deliberate awakening to a sense of the duty of self-purification. Even the indifference or sufferance would have been impossible fifteen years ago. The willing act of self-purification will, let us hope and pray, be the next step.

Only the other day a friend suggested to me that the word Harijana (man of God) be substituted for the word 'antyaja' (the 'lastborn') that is being used for 'untouchables'. It was a word by the great saint Narsingh Mehta, who by the by belonged to the Nagar Brahman community and who defied the whole community by claiming the 'untouchables' as his own. I am delighted to adopt that word which is sanctified by having been used by such a great saint, but it has for me a deeper meaning than you may imagine. The 'untouchable', to me,

is, compared to us, really a Harijana—a man of God, and we are 'Durjana ( men of evil ). For whilst the 'untouchable' has toiled and moiled and dirtied his hands so that we may live in comfort and cleanliness, we have delighted in suppressing him. we are solely responsible for all the shortcomings and faults that we lay at the door of these 'untouchables'. It is still open to us to be Harijana ourselves, but we can only do so by heartily repenting of our sin against them."<sup>8</sup>

\* From Young India of August 6, 1931.



### **'Suppressed' Classes.**

Vivekanand used to call the Panchamas 'suppressed classes.' There is no doubt that Vivekananda's is a more accurate adjective. We have suppressed them and have consequently become ourselves depressed. That we have become the 'Pariahs of the Empire' is, in Gokhle's language, the retributive justice meted out to us by a just God. A correspondent indignantly asks me in a pathetic letter what I am doing for them: 'Should not we the Hindus wash our bloodstained hands before we ask the English to wash theirs'? This is a proper question seasonably put. And if a member of a slave nation could deliver suppressed classes from their slavery without freeing myself from my own, I would do so to-day. But it is an impossible task. A slave has not the freedom even to do the right thing. It is right for me to prohibit the importation of foreign goods, but I have no power to bring it about..... If I had a

truly national legislature, I would answer Hindu insolence by erecting special and better wells for the exclusive use of the suppressed classes and by erecting better and more numerous schools for them, so that there would be not a single member of suppressed classes left without a school to teach their children. But I must wait for that better day.

Meanwhile, are the depressed classes to be left to their own resources? Nothing of the sort. In my own humble manner, I have done and am doing all I can for my Panchama brother.

There are three courses open to these down-trodden members of the nation. For their impatience they may call in the assistance of the slave-owning Government. They will get it, but they will fall from the frying pan into the fire. To-day they are slaves of slaves. By seeking Government aid, they will be used for suppressing their kith and kin. Instead of being sinned against, they will themselves be the sinners. The Musalmans tried it and failed. They found that they were worse off than

before. The Sikhs did it unwittingly and failed. To-day there is no more discontented community in India than the Sikhs. Government aid is, therefore, no solution.

The second is rejection of Hinduism and wholesale conversion to Islam or Christianity. And if a change of religion could be justified for worldly betterment, I would advise it without hesitation. But religion is a matter of the heart. No physical inconvenience can warrant abandonment of religion. If the inhuman treatment of the Panchmas were a part of Hinduism, its rejection would be paramount duty both for them and for those like me who would not make a fetish even of religion and condone every evil in its sacred name. *But I believe that untouchability is no part of Hinduism. It is rather its excrescence to be removed by every effort.* And there is quite an army of Hindu reformers who have set their heart upon ridding Hinduism of this blot. Conversion therefore, I hold, is no remedy whatsoever.\*

\*Taken from an article in Young India of 27th October, 1920.

## The Panchams

Nowhere is the "untouchable" so cruelly treated as in this ( Madras ) presidency. His very shadow defiles the Brahman. He may not even pass through Brahman streets. Non-Brahmans treat him no better. And between the two the Panchama, as he is called in these parts, is ground to atoms. And yet Madras is a land of mighty temples and religious devotion. The people with their big *tilak* marks, their long locks and their bare clean bodies look like Rishis. But their religion seem almost to be exhausted in these outward observances. It is difficult to understand this Dyerism towards the most industrious and useful citizens in a land that has produced Shankara and Ramanuja. And inspite of the satanic treatment of our own kith and kin in this part of India, I retain my faith in these Southern people. I have told them at all their huge meetings in no uncertain terms, that there can be no Swaraj withot the removal of the curse from our midst.

*I have told them, that our being treated as social lepers in practically the whole world is due to our having treated a fifth of our own race as such.* Non-cooperation is a plea for a change of heart, not merely in the English but equally in ourselves. Indeed, I expect the change first in us and then as a matter of course in the English. A nation that can throw away an age-long curse in a year, a nation that can shed the drink habit as we shed our garments, a nation that can return to its original industry and suddenly utilise its spare hours to manufacture sixty crores worth of cloth during a single year is a transformed nation. Its transformation must react upon the world. It must constitute even for the scoffer a convincing demonstration of God's existence and grace, and so I say, that if India can become transformed in this wise, no power on earth can deny India's right to establish Swaraj. In spite of all the clouds that are thickening on the Indian horizon, I make bold to prophesy, that the moment India has repented of her treatment of the 'untouchables' and has

boycotted foreign cloth, the moment India will be hailed, by the very English officials who seem to have hardened their hearts, as a free and a brave nation. And because I believe, that if Hindus will, it is possible for them to enfranchise the so-called panchams and extend to them the same rights that they claim for themselves. ....This transformation can not take place by any elaborately planned mechanical action. But it can take place if God's grace is with us. Who can deny that God is working a wonderful change in the hearts of every one of us? Any way it is the duty of every worker everywhere to befriend the untouchable brother, and to plead with the un-Hindu Hindus, *that Hinduism of the Vedas, the Upnishadas, Hinduism of the Bhagvad-Gita and of Shankar and Ramanuja contains no warrant for treating a single human being, no matter how fallen, as an untouchable.* Let every worker plead in the gentlest manner possible with orthodoxy, that the bar sinister is the very negation of Ahimsa.

## A Hideous Doctrine

( Message to Travancore )

“Whilst it gives me great pleasure to pay a second visit to this most beautiful part of India, I cannot conceal from you the deep grief I feel for the fact that in this fair land untouchability has a sway which it does not exercise in any other part of India. I feel deeply humiliated as a Hindu to find that it is in this enlightened Hindu state that untouchability appears in its most hideous form of unseeability and unapproachability. I speak with a due sense of my responsibility that *this untouchability is a curse that is eating into the vitals of Hinduism*, and I often feel that unless we take due precautions and remove this curse from our midst, Hinduism itself is in danger of destruction. That in this age of reason, in this age of wide travel, in this age of a comparative study of religions, there should be found people, some of whom are educated, to uphold the hideous doctrine of treating a single human being as an

untouchable, or unapproachable or unseeable because of his birth, passes my comprehension. As a lay humble student of Hinduism and claiming to be one desirous of practising Hinduism in the spirit and to the letter let me tell you that I have found no warrant or support for this terrible doctrine. Let us not deceive ourselves into the belief that everything that is written in Sanskrit and printed is Shastra and has any binding effect upon us. That which is opposed to the fundamental maxims of morality, that which is opposed to trained reason, cannot be claimed as Shastra, no matter how ancient it may be. There is enough warrant for the proposition that I have just stated in the Vedas, in the Mahabharata and in the Bhagavad Gita. I, therefore, hope that it will be possible for the enlightened ruler of Travancore to blot the curse out of the land during her reign. And what can be nobler than that a woman should be able to say to herself and her people that during her rule it has been possible for these people who have been suffering from age-long slavery to receive their full freedom ?



## **Wake up Priests and Savarnas**

“ But I know also her difficulties and those of her councillors. A Government, be it ever so autocratic, is always timid and cautious in moving in such reforms. A wise Government will welcome an agitation in connection with such reforms. An unwise Government impatient of public opinion will use violence in putting down such agitations. But from my personal experience of Vykom Satyagraha I know that you have a Government which will not only tolerate but welcome agitation in order to strengthen its hands to achieve this reform. The real initiative therefore must lie with the people of Travancore, and that too not with the so-called untouchables miscalled also ‘Avarna’ Hindus. To me the very ‘Avarna’ Hindu is a misnomer and a reproach to Hinduism. In many cases the remedy or the initiative lies not with them but with the so-called Savarna Hindus who have to rid themselves of the sin of untouchability. Let me tell you that it is not enough for you to hold the belief passively that untouchability is a crime. He who is a passive

spectator of crime is really, and in law, an active participator in it. You must therefore begin and continue your agitation along all lawful and legitimate lines. Let me, if my voice will reach them, carry my voice to the Brahman priests who are opposing this belated reform. It is a painful fact, but it is a historical truth, that priests who should have been the real custodians of religion have been instrumental in destroying the religion of which they have been custodians. I see before my eyes the Brahman priests in Travancore and also elsewhere destroying the very religion of which they are supposed to be custodians, from their ignorance or worse. All their learning, when it is utilised in order to sustain a hideous superstition, a terrible wrong, turns to dust. I wish therefore that they will recognise before it is too late the signs of the times and march with the events which are taking them and us voluntarily or involuntarily along the path of truth. All the religions of the world, while they may differ in other respects unitedly proclaim that nothing lives in this world but truth.

## The Path of the Reformer

“Let me also warn the impatient reformer that unless he keeps himself on the right, strait and narrow path, he will hurt himself and hinder the reform about which he is rightly impatient. I venture to claim that I have placed in the hands of the reformer a matchless and priceless weapon in the form of Satyagraha. But then the conditions of successful Satyagraha are fairly hard. If he has faith in God, faith in himself, faith in his cause, he will never be violent, not even against his most fierce opponent whom he would accuse rightly of injustice, ignorance and even violence. I state without fear of contradiction that truth has never been vindicated by violence. A Satyagrahi therefore expects to conquer his opponents or his so-called enemies not by violent force but by force of love, by process of conversion. His methods will be always gentle and gentlemanly. He will never exaggerate. And since non-violence is otherwise known as love it has no weapon but that of self-suffering. And above all in a movement like that of the removal of untouch-

ability which in my opinion is essentially religious and one of self-purification, there is no room for hate, no room for haste, no room for thoughtlessness and no room for exaggeration. Since Satyagraha is one of the most powerful methods of direct action, a Satyagrahi exhausts all other means before he resorts to Satyagraha. He will therefore constantly and continually approach the constituted authority, he will appeal to public opinion, educate public opinion, state his case calmly and coolly before everybody who wants to listen to him, and only after he has exhausted all these avenues will he resort to Satyagraha. But when he has found the impelling call of the inner voice within him and launches out upon Satyagraha he has burnt his boats and there is no receding. Let me however hope that it will not be necessary in this land for people to undergo all the suffering for removing a wrong which is so patent."\*

\*From the Nagercoil speech.

**The Spirit of Hinduism**  
*(From the Trivandrum Speech)*  
**Hinduism and Untouchability**

"I have always, after having paid the first visit to Travancore, looked forward to a series of visits to this enchanting land. Its most beautiful scenery, the location of Kanyakumari in Travancore, and the simplicity and freedom of the women of Travancore captivated me when I first came here. But the pleasure that all these thoughts and associations always gave me has been seriously marred by the thought that untouchability had assumed its most terrible shape in Travancore, and it has pained me to think that this evil has existed in that terrible form in a most ancient Hindu state, which has the privilege of occupying the first place in all India in educational progress. And this existence of untouchability in its extreme form has always caused me so much pain, because I consider myself to be a Hindu of Hindus saturated with the spirit of Hinduism.

I have failed to find a single warrant for the existence of untouchability as we believe and practice it to-day in all those books which we call as Hindu Shastras. But as I have repeatedly said in other places if I found that Hinduism really countenanced untouchability I should have no hesitation in renouncing Hinduism itself. For I hold that religion, to be worthy of the name, must not be inconsistent with the fundamental truths of ethics and morality. But as I believe that untouchability is no part of Hinduism, I cling to Hinduism, but daily become more and more impatient of this hideous wrong. So, when I found that this question was agitating Travancore I had no hesitation in plunging myself into it. If I have taken up this question, I have done so not in any way to embarrass the state. For I believe that Her Highness the Maharani Regent\* is solicitous about the welfare of her people. She also claims to be a reformer along these lines, and I fancy that I commit no breach of

\*This speech was delivered five years ago. Since then many changes have taken place and the Maharaja has been installed on the Gaddi and has taken charge of affairs of his state. —Editor.

confidence when I tell you that she is eager to see that this wrong is removed at the earliest possible moment.

### Duty of State and People

"But then Governments cannot afford to lead in matters of reform. By their very nature Governments are but interpreters and executors of the expressed will of the people whom they govern, and even a most autocratic Government will find itself unable to impose a reform which its people cannot assimilate. So, if I was a subject of Travancore State I should be entirely satisfied to know that my Government was willing to carry forward this reform as speedily as the people were willing to assimilate it. But having satisfied myself of that one thing, I should not rest content for one single moment till I had carried the message of reform from mouth to mouth and village to village. Well-ordered, persistent, agitation is the soul of healthy progress, and so if I were you, I would not let the Government rest till this reform was carried through. Not allowing the Government to rest does not by any means mean embarrassing.

the Government. A wise Government welcomes and needs the support and warmth and encouragement of such an agitation in order to achieve a reform which the Government itself wants. I know that when I was here last, I was told that Savarna (caste) Hindus were all most anxious for this reform of the abolition of untouchability in every shape and form. But I am afraid that the Savarna (caste) Hindus have slept over their wish. They have not given a concrete form to their wish, and I believe that it is the bounden duty of every Hindu in the state to wake up to a sense of his duty and to wake up his lethargic brethren also to a sense of their duty. And I have no shadow of a doubt that if Savarna Hindus could with one voice express their wish, this monster of untouchability would go. It would be wrong therefore to ascribe our own lethargy and slothfulness to the Government.

### The Secret of Satyagraha

"But reformers in every community and every country are to be counted on one's finger tips; and I know that the brunt of all such reform falls upon the devoted heads of that



small band of reformers. What are the reformers then to do in the face of this evil of such long standing,—is really the question one has to solve. The reformers all over the world have resorted to one or other of the two methods that I am about to mention. The vast majority of them have drawn attention to evils by creating wild agitation and resorting to violence. They have resorted to agitation that embarrasses the Government, that embarrasses the people and that disturbs the even tenour of the life of the citizens. The other school of reformers which I would call the non-violent school resorts to agitation of the gentle type. It disdains to draw attention by doing violence in thought, word or deed; but it draws attention by simple self-suffering. It never exaggerates. It never departs by a hair's breadth from truth; and whilst impatient of evil does not mean ill—even to the evil-doer. I have given that a short name and I have placed it before this country as before South Africa in the name of Satyagraha. Do not for one moment mix up Satyagraha with civil disobedience. Civil disobedience is

no doubt a branch of Satyagraha. It comes not at the beginning but at the fag end. It presupposes immense discipline. It presupposes great self-restraint. It is based upon charity and it never puts an unfavourable or unwarranted construction even upon the motives of its opponents. For it seeks not to coerce but to convert. You may therefore imagine my painful surprise when I found the whole of my doctrine and my remarks grossly misinterpreted by a friend who visited me in Virudhanagar. I saw in the *Trivandrum Express* a report given by him of what had occurred between him and myself. It is a distortion from start to finish of the conversation that I had with him (A voice; "Shame.'). But there is no warrant for crying "shame." The gentleman who cried shame evidently does not know the virtue or meaning of charity. For I do not for one moment suggest that the friend who saw me has consciously or deliberately distorted my meaning. I am prepared to believe the explanation that he gave me this morning. But I have drawn your attention to this prominently in order to

illustrate what I mean by Satyagraha and also to show you the danger of those who do not know this fine weapon dabbling in it. I am simply giving this example in order to warn the would-be reformer against undertaking this method unless he is absolutely sure of his ground and unless he has got more than the ordinary measure of self-control, and seeing that I am enamoured of this method of Satyagraha, which I consider to be a matchless weapon, I do not want it to be misused or abused, so long as I can prevent it. I therefore advised this friend to keep out of this problem until he had understood what Satyagraha really was, and unless he had assimilated the true spirit of it.

“But this again is not intended to damp the zeal of even a single reformer. I am going into the problem so much in detail, for the simple reason that I want you to work at it in order to get the quickest possible solution. I want therefore humbly to suggest that those of you who have had some experience of public life should take up this movement and make it their own and harness the energy and the will of the

youths who are interested in this problem but do not know how to solve it. And I suggest also that you place yourself in touch with the authorities and day after day worry the life out of them until this reform is achieved. For I am free to tell you that not only is Her Highness desirous of carrying out this reform but so is the Diwan Sahib himself. But belonging as he does to a different faith, you and I Hindus can appreciate his limitations. In my opinion, so far as the Government is concerned, it is on the side of reform; only the initiative will have to come from you and not from the Government. You will forgive me for having dealt with this important question in a highly technical manner. I could not do otherwise as I have no other time at my disposal so that I could have convened a few of the leaders at a conference and discussed the pros and cons. I felt therefore that you will overlook the heaviness of my speech in connection with untouchability before a big audience as this."

## Varnashram Dharma and Untouchability

“ One question was put to me arising out of this question this morning, and that was what was the bearing of *Varnashrama Dharma* upon untouchability. That means that I should say a few words about my conception of *Varnashrama Dharma*. So far as I know anything at all of Hinduism, the meaning of *Varna* is incredibly simple. It simply means the following on the part of us all the hereditary and traditional calling of our forefathers, in so far as that traditional calling is not inconsistent with fundamental ethics, and this only for the purpose of earning one's livelihood. I regard this as the law of our being, if we would accept the definition of man given in all religions. Of all the animal creation of God, man is the only animal who has been created in order that he may know his Maker. Man's aim in life is not therefore to add from day to day to his material prospects and to his material possessions but his predominant calling is from day to day to come

nearer his own Maker, and from this definition it was that the Rishis of old discovered this law of our being. You will realise that if all of us follow this law of *Varna* we would limit our material ambition, and our energy would be set free for exploring those vast fields whereby and wherethrough we can know God. You will at once then see that nine-tenths of the activities that are today going on throughout the world and which are engrossing our attention would fall into disuse. You will then be entitled to say that *Varna* as we observe it today is a travesty of the *Varna* that I have described to you. And so it undoubtedly is, but just as we do not hate truth because untruth parades itself as truth, but we sift untruth from truth and cling to the latter, so also we can destroy the distortion that passes as *Varna*, and purify the state to which the Hindu society has been reduced today.

*Ashrama* is a necessary corollary to what I have stated to you, and if *Varna* today has become distorted, *Ashrama* has altogether disappeared. *Ashrama* means the four stages

in one's life, and I wish the students who have kindly presented their purses to me—the Arts and Science students and the Law College students—were able to assure me that they were living according to the laws of the first *Ashrama*, and that they were *brahmacharis* in thought, word and deed. The *Brahmacharya Ashrama* enjoins that only those who live the life of a *brahmachari*, at least up to 25 years, are entitled to enter upon the second *Ashrama*, i. e., the *Grihasthashrama*. And because the whole conception of Hinduism is to make man better than he is and draw him nearer to his Maker, the Rishis set a limit even to the *Grihasthashrama* stage and imposed on us the obligation of *Vanaprastha* and *Sannyasa*. But today you will vainly search throughout the length and breadth of India for a true *brahmachari*, for a true *grihastha*, not to talk of a *vanaprasthi* and *sannyasi*. We may, in our elongated wisdom, laugh at this scheme of life, if we wish to. But I have no doubt whatsoever that this is the secret of the great success of Hinduism. The Hindu civilization has survived

the Egyptian, the Assyrian and the Babylonian. The Christian is but two thousand years old. The Islamic is but of yesterday. Great as both these are they are still, in my humble opinion, in the making. Christian Europe is not at all Christian, but is groping, and so in my opinion is Islam still groping for its great secret, and there is to-day a competition, healthy as also extremely unhealthy and ugly, between these three great religions. As years go by, the conviction is daily growing upon me that *Varna* is the law of man's being and therefore as necessary for Christianity and Islam, as it has been necessary for Hinduism and has been its saving. I refuse, therefore, to believe that *Varnashrama* has been the curse of Hinduism, as it is the fashion nowadays in the south on the part of some Hindus to say. But that does not mean that you and I may tolerate for one moment or be gentle towards the hideous travesty of *Varnashrama* that we see about us to-day. There is nothing in common between *Varnashrama* and caste. Caste, if you will, is undoubtedly a drag upon Hindu progress, and



untouchability is, as I have already called it or described it, an excrescence upon *Varnashrama*. It is a weedy growth fit only to be weeded out, as we weed out the weeds that we see growing in wheat fields or rice fields. In this conception of *Varna*, there is absolutely no idea of superiority and inferiority. If I again interpret the Hindu spirit rightly all life is absolutely equal and one. It is therefore an arrogant assumption on the part of the Brahman when he says, 'I am superior to the other three *Varnas*.' That is not what the Brahmans of old said. They commanded homage not because they claimed superiority, but because they claimed the right of service through and through without the slightest expectation of a reward. The priests, who to-day arrogate to themselves the function of the Brahman and distort religion, are no custodians of Hinduism or Brahmanism. Consciously or unconsciously they are laying the axe at the root of the very tree on which they are sitting, and when they tell you that *Shastras* enjoin untouchability and when they talk of pollution distance, I have no hesitation

in saying that they are belying their creed and that they are misinterpreting the spirit of Hinduism. You will now perhaps understand why it is absolutely necessary for you Hindus who are here and listening to me to energise yourselves and rid yourselves of this curse. You should take pride in leading the way of reform, belonging as you do to an ancient Hindu state. So far as I can read the atmosphere around you here, the moment is certainly propitious for you if you will sincerely and energetically undertake this reform."\*

\*Taken from the Trivendrum Speech.

## Appeal to the Caste Hindus

*"Untouchability poisons Hinduism as a drop of arsenic poisons milk."*

"Knowing the quality of milk, and the use of milk and knowing the quality of arsenic, we should be impatient with the man sitting near a pitcher of milk and trying to remove arsenic grain by grain, and we should throw the whole pitcher overboard. Even so do I as a Hindu feel that the curse of untouchability is rendering the milk of Hinduism altogether poisoned and impure. I feel therefore that patience in a matter of this character is not a virtue. It is impossible to restrain ourselves. Patience with evil is really trifling with evil and with ourselves. I have therefore not hesitated to say that the state of Travancore should lead in the matter of the reform and blot out the evil at a single stroke. But I know also that it was not possible even for a Hindu state to do away with this evil, unless it was backed and actively backed by its Hindu population. And so my appeal must be mostly to you rather than to the head of the state, and to every Hindu in this meeting I wish

to make a definite personal appeal. You and I have long neglected our duty to the so-called untouchables and unapproachables, and to this extent you and I have been false representatives of Hinduism. I ask you without the slightest hesitation summarily to reject the advance of every person who comes to you in defence of untouchability. Remember that in this age whatever one man or group of men and women do, does not remain secret for any length of time, and we are daily being weighed and found wanting so long as we nurse untouchability in our bosom. You must remember that all the great religions of the world are at the present time in the melting pot. Let us not ostrich-like hide our faces and ignore the danger that lies at the back of us. I have not a shadow of doubt that in the great turmoil now taking place either untouchability has to die or Hinduism has to disappear. But I do know that Hinduism is not dying, is not going to die, because I see untouchability is a corpse struggling with its last breath to hold on for a little while.”\*

\*From the Quilon Speech.

## Varnashram Again

A correspondent writes :—

“In your recent Madras speech you have stated your faith in the four Varnas. But should the Varnas be strictly hereditary? Some people think that you favour rigid adherence to the hereditary principle; other's that you do not. From a perusal of your writings, I am inclined to agree with the former. For instance, what else does your dictum that the ‘untouchables’ should be classed with ‘Shudras’ and that they should enjoy all the rights of ‘Non-Brahmans’, indicate? Why this constant reiteration of the old arbitrary distinction between Brahman and Non-Brahman as if the two belonged to biologically different species? If an ‘untouchable’ can become a ‘Non-Brahman’ can he not also become a Brahman in this very life? Again, if it is possible for an ‘untouchable’ to become a ‘Shudra’ how is it impossible for a *Shudra* to become a *Vaishya*, for a *Vaishya* to

become a *Kashtriya* or for a *Kshatriya* to become a *Brahman* in this very life? Why do you hurl the Law of *Karma* in the face of those who believe it to be possible? Is there a better *Brahman* than Shri Narayan Guru Swami, the Ezheva? I know no better *Brahman* than Gandhi, the *Bania*. I know also of hundreds of other 'Non-Brahmans' who are bettter Brahman (in the best sense of that term) than most birth Brahman.

"If you did not favour strict application of the principal of heredity, you would not seek to prohibit inter-marriages between people of the same race professing the same religion and following the same customs as are several members of the three *Dwija* castes. Nor would you so strenuously oppose inter-dining between, say, vegetarian Brahman and vegetarian Non-Brahman.

"Of course, heredity is a great Law of life, but there are even greater laws controlling its mysterious processes. One of them is the law of variation in the phraseology of Evolutionary

Biology. Heredity is the static and variation is the dynamic principle of the universe. The latter it is that holds the key to what you call 'progress' for want of a better name. No social system can ignore the law of heredity with impunity; neither can a social system ignore the law of variation except at its peril. The history of the caste system in India affords enough proof of this. It proves above all that the worst form in which the law of heredity can be applied in and social organisation is to create a hereditary clerg to be the sole custodians of its intellectual and spiritual affairs and trustees in perpetuity of its religion.

"Even Babu Bhagvan Das than whom there is no more orthodox Brahman\* and who has done some hard thinking on the subject of social reconstruction in India, conceded some years ago that the hereditary principle in *Varnashram Dharma* must be considerably relaxed. It would be, indeed, strange if you of all men championed rigid

\*Sri Bhagvan Dasji is not a Brahman by birth as the correspondent says in his letter. He, no doubt, surpasses a caste-Brahman by virtue of his pure thinking and deep learning. —Editor.

adherence to it. As a great many people do not know what you exactly think of it all, I hope it will be possible for you to publish this letter with your reply in your esteemed journal."

I fancy that I have answered all the arguments advanced by correspondent against *Varnashram*. But evidently readers have short memories or only those who are concerned for the moment read what is written for them. Thus, for instance, I have often shown the distinction between *Varnashram* and untouchability. I have defended the one as a rational scientific fact and condemned the other as an excrescence, an unmitigated evil. It may be that my denseness sees a distinction where none exists. It may be, too that I see science where there is ignorance or superstition. But I do regard *Varnashram* as a healthy division of work based on birth. The present ideas of caste are perversion of the original. There is no question with me of superiority or inferiority. It is purely a question of duty. I have indeed stated that *Varna* is based on birth. But I have also said that it is possible for a *Shudra*, for instance, to become a *Vaishya*.



But in order to perform the duty of a *Vaishya* he does not need the label of a *Vaishya*. Swami Narayan Guru does not need to be called a Brahman in order to be enable him to be, what he is reported to be, a Sanskrit scholar. He who performs the duty of a Brahman will easily become one in the next incarnation. But a translation from one *Varna* to another in the present incarnation must result in a great deal of fraud. The natural consequence must be the obliteration of *Varna*. I have seen no reason to justify its destruction. It may be a hindrance to material ambition. I must be excused from applying material consideration to an institution that is based on religious considerations.

Nor is the correspondent happy in his analogy. I have asked that a Pancham should be regarded as a *Shudra* because I hold that there is no warrant for believing in a fifth caste. A Pancham does the work of a *Shudra* and he is therefore naturally classified as such then he ceases to be regarded as a Pancham. I do believe that this constant confusion between untouchability and *Varnashram* and attack on the

latter in the same breath as the former retards the progress of reform regarding untouchability.

It is now clear that the law of variation is left untouched by *Varnashram*. Nay it is provided for. Only, types do not vary in a few years or in a few generations. There is no fundamental difference between a Brahman and a Pariah, but he who runs may see that, class considered, there is a marked and naticable difference between Brahmans and Parihas or for that matter all the four castes. What I would like my correspondent to join me in, is a fight against an arrogant assumption of superiority whether it is assumed by Brahmans or others. It is the abuse of *Varnashram* that should be combated, not the thing itself.

## Varnashram and Untouchability

A correspondent writes :

"With reference to your comment on my letter on Varnashram\*.....I fully appreciate the distinction between Varnashram and untouchability and agree that there is no sanction whatsoever for the latter in Hinduism. But is it not clear that if the principle of 'division of work based on birth' which you approve continues to be the basis of our social organisation, the untouchables will be always with us? What is more reasonable than to suppose that in that case those members of society who hereditarily perform such social duties as scavenging, corpse-bearing and grave-digging will continue to be looked upon as too unclean to be touched by the rest of the community? In all other countries, scavengers, washermen, grave-diggers, undertakers etc., are not considered untouchable either as individuals or as a class for the simple reason that in those countries these occupations

\*See the article 'Varnashram Again', referred to in this article.

are not hereditary and any member of any of the classes can at any time become a soldier, trader, teacher, lawyer, politician or priest. It seems to me, therefore, that the root of the evil of untouchability so peculiar to our country lies in our peculiar social system exclusively based on the principle of heredity. And it also seems to me that so long as we adhere to that principle we can not hope to get rid of untouchability. It is just conceivable that under the influence of mighty reformers like Ramanuja or under the stress of a strong political passion its virulence may abate from time to time but the evil can not be wholly eliminated. I am afraid that every attempt to end untouchability without ending the caste idea will prove as futile as attempting to cut off a tree at its top."

The letter is very plausible and unless the reformer takes care the danger which the correspondent fears may become a stern reality. There is, however, a clear confusion of thought in the argument. Does untouchability in the case of a cobbler or scavenger attach to birth or to occupation? If

it attaches to birth it is hideous and must be rooted out ; if it attaches to occupation it may be a sanitary rule of great importance. It is of universal application. A collier, whilst he is engaged in his work is practically an untouchable. He, himself, refuses to shake the hand extended to him and says, " I am too dirty." But his work finished, he takes his bath, changes his dress and very properly mixes with the highest in the land. Immediately, therefore, we remove the taint of birth, i. e. the idea of superiority and inferiority attaching to birth, we purify Varnashram. The scavenger's children may remain scavengers without being or feeling degraded and they will be no more considered untouchables than Brahmans. The fault does not, therefore, lie in recognising the law of heredity and transmission of qualities from generation to generation, but it lies with the faulty conception of inequality.

Varnashram, in my opinion, was not conceived in any narrow spirit. On the contrary, gave the labourer, the Shudra, the same status as the thinker, the Brahmin. It provided for

the accentuation of merit and elimination of demerit, and it transferred human ambition from the general worldly sphere to the permanent and the spiritual. The aim of the Brahman and the Shudra was common—Moksha, or self-realisation—not realisation of fame, riches and power. Later on this lofty conception of Varnashram became degraded and came to be identified with mere empty ceremonial and assumption of superiority by some and imposition of degradation upon others. The admission is not a demonstration of the weakness of Varnashram but of human nature which if it has a tendency under certain circumstances to rise to the highest point, it has also a tendency under certain other circumstances to go down to the lowest. What the reformer seeks to do is to end the curse of untouchability and to restore Varnashram to its proper place. Whether Varnashram thus transmuted will survive the reform or not remains to be seen. It will surely depend upon the new Brahman class that is imperceptibly coming into being, namely, those who are dedicating themselves, body, soul,

and mind, to service of Hinduism and the country. If they have nothing of worldly ambition, it will be well with Hinduism, if they have, Hinduism, like any other ism, coming into the hands of ambitious men will perish. But I have an immutable faith in the capacity of Hinduism to purge itself of all impurities from time to time. I do not think that that capacity is now exhausted.

## Bengal Untouchables

A Bengali Correspondent asks :

1. "In Bengal the Untouchables are not allowed to draw water from the wells, nor are they allowed to enter the room where drinking water is kept. What should be done to remove the evil? If we dig separate wells for them or establish separate schools, that will be making allowance for this vice.

2. "The mentality of the Untouchables in Bengal is that the upper classes should take water from their hands, but they themselves refuse to take water from the hands of those who are below them. What should be done to wean them from the error?

3. "The Hindu Mahasabha in Bengal and the Hindus in general tell the people that you do not like the idea of taking water from the hands of Untouchables?"

My answers are :

1. One way of removing the evil is for us to take water from the hands of the Untouchables. I do not think that the digging of separate wells for them will perpetuate the evil. It will



take a long time to root out the effects of Untouchability. It would be wrong to withhold help from the Untouchables in the shape of providing them with separate wells for fear of others never letting them use public wells. my belief is that if we build good wells for the Untouchables many people will use them. Roform among the Untouchables must proceed side by side with breaking down of the prejudice against them by caste Hindus realising their duty towards them.

2. When the so-called 'superior' Hindus begin to 'touch' the Untouchables, the untouchability among the Untouchables themselves is bound to die a natural death. Our work must commence with the lowest among the Untouchables.

3. I do not know what the Hindu Mahasabha of Bengal has been ascribing to me. My position is clear. Untouchables should be treated as and classed among the Shudras. And since we do take water from the hands of Shudras, we should not hesitate to accept it from Untouchables.

## A Difficult Problem

An Andhra correspondent invites attention to his difficulties as follows :

".....In one of your answers to a Bengal correspondent on untouchability you have stated thus : "Since 'we' do take water from the Shudra we should not hesitate to accept it from the hands of the Untouchables," meaning by 'we' the high-caste Hindus..... But are you aware of the fact that in Andhra as well as in still Southern parts of India Brahmans do not only not take water from the hands of Non-Brahmans (of any of the other three castes) but the more orthodox of them observe strict untouchability with Non-Brahmans.

"You have often said that you do not advocate inter-dining as essential to the removal of the present false notions of superiority of castes. You have quoted once an instance of Pt. Malviyaji to bring out the fact that living as you are in mutual admiration and respect you could not think Malviyaji meaning any contempt to you if he refused water or any thing else from your hands. I agree there it might have meant

no contempt. But do you know that the Brahman of our part do not take food if seen by a Non-Brahman even if it be from a distance of hundred yards? Let alone the touching of it by him. May I also point out that a word or two escaping the mouth of a Shudra in street is enough to rouse the orthodox Brahman at meal to anger and he will go without meal the whole day? In what way can these facts be interpreted if they can mean no contempt? Has not the Brahman put an air of superiority? Will you please enlighten me on these points? I am myself a Brahman youth and hence write with first-hand knowledge."

Untouchability is a hydra-headed monster. It is a deeply moral and religious question. Inter-dining, to me, is a social question. Behind the present untouchability there is undoubtedly and necessarily contempt for a portion of one's species. It is a canker that is eating into the vitals of society. It is a denial of the rights of man. It does not stand on a par with inter-dining. And I would strongly urge social reformers not to mix the two. If they do, they would

injure the sacred cause of "the untouchables and the unapproachables". The Brahman correspondent's difficulty is real. It shows the length to which the evil has been carried. The name Brahman should be, as it once was, a synonym for utter humility, self-effacement, sacrifice, purity, courage, forgiveness and true knowledge. But to-day this sacred land is cursed with divisions between Brahmans and Non-Brahmans. In many instances the Brahman has lost the superiority which he never claimed but which was his by right of service. He is now desperately striving to assert what he can not claim and has therefore roused the jealousy of Non-Brahmans in some parts of India. Fortunately for Hinduism and fortunately for the country there are Brahmans like the correspondent who are fighting with all their strength the tendency towards the ominous assertion and are serving the Non-Brahmans with a self-less pertinacity which is worthy of their high traditions. Everywhere one finds Brahmans in the forefront fighting the evil of untouchability..... I urge the Southern Brahman of the type men-

tioned by the Andhra correspondent to recognise the signs of the times and rid himself of false notions of superiority or of superstition that smells sin in the visible approach of a Non-Brahman or regards his dinner as polluted if he hears the voice of a Non-Brahman. The Brahmans taught the world to see *Brahman* in every thing. Surely then there can be no defilement from outside. It comes from within. Let the Brahman re-deliver the message that the untouchables and the unapproachables are the evil thoughts that one harbours. He taught the world to believe that 'man is truly his own deliverer as he is also his own defiler or captor.'

The Non-Brahman must not be ruffled by the things mentioned by the Andhra correspondent. Brahmans like the Andhra correspondent will fight, as they are fighting, his battle. He must not, as I fear is the growing tendency, despise the whole race of Brahmans because of the sins of a few. Let him be dignified enough not to claim right conduct towards himself from those who will mis-conduct themselves. I need not feel insulted because the passerby does not

acknowledge me or because he feels polluted by my touch or presence or voice. It is enough that I refuse at his bidding to move from my path or to desist from speaking for fear of his hearing my voice. I may pity his ignorant assumption of superiority or his superstition but I may not get irritated and develop the contempt I would fain resent when directed towards myself. The Non-Brahman will lose his case by loss of self-restraint. Above all let him not, by overstepping the mark, embarrass his Brahman champions. *The Brahman is the finest flower of Hinduism and humanity.* I will do nothing to wither it. I know that it is well able to take care of itself. It has weathered many a storm before now. Only let it not be said of Non-Brahmans that they attempted to rob the flower of its fragrance and lustre. I would not have the Non-Brahmans to rise on the ruins of the Brahmans. I would rather that they rose to the height that the Brahmans have occupied before now. Brahmanism is born, not so Brahmanism. It is a quality open to be cultivated by the lowliest or the lowest among us.

## Pertinent Questions

I printed sometime ago a thoughtful letter from Bengal on the question of untouchability.\* The writer is still pursuing his diligent search. Now I have a similar search from a Madras correspondent in the form of questions. It is a healthy sign that orthodox Hindus are moved to an enquiry into this thorny question. There is no denying the earnestness of the framer of the questions. They are typical because there is hardly one among the long list that has not been put to me in my rambles. In the hope therefore, that my answers may guide the path of the correspondent who claims to be a worker and an earnest seeker, and such other workers and seekers, I make an attempt to solve the many riddles presented by my correspondent.

1. What are the practical steps to be taken to remove untouchability ?

\*Please see, 'Bengal Untouchables,' already given in this book, and referred to in this article.

### Pertinent Questions

(a) To open to untouchables all public schools, temples and roads that are open to Non-Brahmans and are not exclusively devoted to any particular caste.

(b) For caste Hindus to open schools for their children, to dig wells where they are in need and to render them all personal service that they may need, *e.g.*, to carry on temperance and hygienic reform among them and to provide them with medical aid.

2. What would be the religious status of the untouchables when the ban of untouchability is completely removed?

The religious status would be the same as that of the caste Hindus. They will therefore be classed as Shudras instead of Ati-Shudras.

3. What would be the relation between the untouchables and the high-caste orthodox Brahman, when untouchability is removed?

The same as with Non-Brahman Hindus.

4. Do you advocate inter-mingling of caste?



I would abolish all castes and keep the four divisions.

5. Why should not the untouchables build temples for their own worship, without interfering with the existing temples ?

The 'higher' castes have not left them much capacity for such enterprise. It is the wrong way of looking at the question to say that they interfere with our temples. We the so-called higher caste men have to do our duty by admitting them to the temples common to all Hindus.

6. Are you an advocate of communal representation, and do you hold that the untouchables must have representation in all administrative bodies ?

I am not. But if the untouchables are purposely shut out by the influential classes, it would be an improper exclusion barring the road to Swaraj. My disapproval of communal representation does not mean exclusion of any community from representation but on the

contrary, it lays the burden on the represented communities to see to the proper representation of the unrepresented or inadequately represented communities.

7. Are you a believer of the efficacy of the Varnashram Dharma?

Yes. But there is to-day a travesty of Varna, no trace of Ashram and a misrepresentation of Dharma. The whole system needs to be revised and brought in unison with the latest discoveries in the field of religion.

8. Dont you believe that India is Karma-Bhumi, and that everybody born here is endowed with wealth and intelligence, social status and religious aspirations according to his good or ill-deeds in his previous birth?

Not in the sense the correspondent means. For everybody everywhere reaps as he sows. But India is essentially Karmabhumi (land of duty) in contradistinction to Bhogabhumi (land of enjoyment).

9. Is not education and reform among the untouchables a primary condition to be fulfilled ere one can begin to talk of the removal of untouchability?

There can be no reform or education among the untouchables without the removal of untouchability.

10. Is it not natural, and just as it should be, that non-drunkards avoid drunkards, and that vegetarians avoid non-vegetarians?

Not necessarily. A teetotalor would regard it as his duty to associate with his drunkard brother for the purpose of weaning him from the evil habit. So may a vegetarian seek out a non-vegetarian.

11. Is it not true, that a pure man (in the sense that he is a teetotalor and vegetarian) easily becomes an impure man (in the sense that he becomes a drunkard, and non-vegetarian,) when he is made to mingle with man, who drink, and kill, and eat animals?

A man who, being unconscious of the wrong, drinks wine and eats flesh-foods, is not necessarily an impure man. But I can understand the possibility of evil resulting from one being *made* to mingle with a corrupt person. In our case, however, there is no case of *making* any one associate with untouchables.

12. Is it not owing to the above fact that a certain class of orthodox Brahmans do not mingle with the other castes (including the untouchables), but constitute themselves into a separate class, and live together for their spiritual uplift?

It must be a poor spirituality that requires to be locked up in a safe. Moreover days are gone when men used to guard their virtue by permanent isolation.

13. Would you not be interfering with the religions and caste system (Varnashram Dharma) of India, whatever may be bad or good points of above systems and religions, if you advocate the removal of untouchability?

How do I interfere with anything or anybody by mere advocacy of a reform? Interference there would be, if I were to advocate removal of untouchability by the use of force against those who retain untouchability.

14. Would you not be guilty of doing *himsa* to the orthodox Brahmans, if you interfere with their religious beliefs without convincing them in the first instance?

I can not be guilty of *himsa* to the orthodox Brahmins as I do not interfere with their religious belief except through conviction.

15. Are not the Brahmans guilty of untouchability, when they do not touch, dine with or marry the various other castes, leaving alone the untouchables?

Brahmans are guilty of the sin if they refuse to 'touch' the other castes.

16. Does it satisfy the hunger of the untouchable when he is made to parade Brahman agraharams, in the exercise of his right as a man?

Man does not live by bread alone. Many prefer self-respect to food.

17. Does not Satyagraha in this direction lead to violence, seeing that the untouchables are not so well educated as to understand the full doctrine of non-violent non-cooperation and also seeing that the Brahman cares more for his religion than for politics?

If reference is to Vykom, experience shows that the 'untouchable' has shown amazing self-restraint. The latter part of the question suggests the possibility of violence by the Brahmans concerned. I should be sorry if *they* resort to violence. They would then have shown, in my opinion, not regard for religion but ignorance of and contempt for religion.

18. Do you advocate that all should become equal, without any distinction of caste, race, creed or avocation?

Such should be the case in the eye of the law in the matter of elementary human rights, even as, irrespective of caste, race, creed or colour, we

have certain things in common, *e.g.*, hunger, thirst etc.

19. Would that supreme philosophical truth be of any use in the field of practical politics, to the average Grihasth or householder, seeing that only great souls, who have come to the end of their cycle of Karma, could realise and practise that supreme philosophical truth, and not the ordinary Grihasth, who has only to follow what the Rishis have ordained, and in that following, get discipline, which consequently leads to release from birth and death ?

Not much 'supreme philosophical truth' is involved in the recognition of the simple truth that no human being is to be regarded as untouchable by reason of his birth. The truth is so simple that it is recognised all over the world except by orthodox Hindus. I have questioned the statement that the Rishis taught the doctrine of untouchability as we practise it.

## **The thousand-headed Monster**

The monster of untouchability shows his deadly fangs from his thousand mouths nowhere more persistently than in the south. Thus a correspondent from that quarter :

“Whereas it has been apprehended in orthodox circles, that the preachers of untouchability are apt to confound the issues and implications involved in the principle by an attempt to push it to an undue extent so as to create unnecessary friction, I wish to elicit from you a definite pronouncement as regards the scope and extent of untouchability, in the light of the undermentioned observations offered in the form of questions.”

Though I do not think that the ‘preachers of untouchability’ or rather of anti-untouchability have done anything so as to create any avoidable friction, it is best to deal with the questions that often arise even in the minds of men who are not



in any way mischievously inclined, and who would, if they could, endorse the anti-untouchability movement but who are unknowingly to themselves obsessed by age-long prejudices.

The correspondent's first question is :

“Do you think that the principles of *varnashrama dharma* are inconsistent with the formation of Indian nationality?”

In the first place *varnashrama* has nothing to do with untouchability or with castes as we know them to-day. In the second place *varnashrama*, as I know it, is in no way inconsistent with the growth of Indian nationality. On the contrary if it has the meaning that I have given to it, it is calculated to promote a truly national spirit.

The second question is: “Do you think that sins of touch and sight are of Vedic origin?”

Though I cannot speak with authority based on first-hand knowledge, I have full confidence in the purity of the Vedas, and therefore have

no hesitation in asserting that the sins of touch and sight have no support in the Vedas, but scholars like Sjt. C. V. Vaidya and Pandit Satavalekar can speak with much greater authority than I can lay claim to. I would however add, that no matter what is credited with Vedic origin, if it is repugnant to the moral sense, it must be summarily rejected as contrary to the spirit of the Vedas, and perhaps what is more, as contrary to fundamental ethics.

The next four questions may be condensed as follows :

“Don't you think that the *karmakanda* is based upon a knowledge of the laws of magnetism, and that the rules regarding touch and sight, birth pollution and death pollution are intended for the purification of the mind?”

In so far as they are so intended, they have a certain relative value, but the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and all the other Shastras as also the other religions of the world proclaim in no uncertain terms that purification of the mind is an inward process, and that the

## The Bleeding Wound

magnetism produced by the inter-action of physical bodies is nothing compared to the other subtle magnetism of mind upon mind, and the outward purificatory rites become soul destroying, when they result in making man arrogate to himself superiority over fellow human beings and in making him treat them virtually as beasts or even less.

The seventh question is : "Do you think that the procedure adopted by Jivanmuktas, that is those who have in the present body attained salvation, who are above the rules of do and don't are conducive to the spiritual growth of ordinary folk?"

I do not think that anybody, however highly evolved he may be, who lives on the earth and among earthly beings, can be himself above the obligations binding on common mortals, and therefore these rules have to appeal to reason and must never be allowed to crush the spirit within. The rules about untouchability have been demonstrated and can be demonstrated to be injurious to the growth of the spirit, and they

are wholly contrary to all that is best and noblest in Hinduism.

Then the question is : “Do you not believe in *varna dharma*?”

I do in the manner often explained in these pages. In my opinion *varna dharma* has nothing to do with untouchability or superiority of one division over another.

The next question is : “Exceptions to untouchability are contained in the following verse;

कल्याणे तीर्थयात्रायां राष्ट्रकोपे च संभ्रमे ।  
देवोत्सवे च दारिद्रे स्पृष्टिदोषो न विद्यते ॥

“Auspicious occasions, pilgrimages, political agitations, occasions of fright or fear, festive occasions of deities, poverty. These exceptions go to prove the rule. Will you please press this authority into your service and prescribe a limit to it?”

The wise man who conceived this verse has taken in the broad sweep of his exceptions every conceivable occasion. I would therefore like the

protagonists of untouchability to present the reader.....with occasions which will not be covered by fright or fear, poverty or auspicious occasions. And this correspondent has also not seen the terrible poverty of thought of those who hug untouchability in that in the various provinces sanction for untouchability merely rests upon tradition. No one has yet given an intelligent definition of untouchable, unseeable and unapproachable.

The last question is: "In the attempt to spiritualise politics, what is the limit to which you want to relegate untouchability?"

There is no limit. The very beginning of spiritualisation of politics rests in the banishing root and branch of untouchability as it is practised to-day. Untouchability attaching to birth or a calling is an atrocious doctrine repugnant to the religious sense of man.

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## A Diehard

Prejudices die hard. Though the atrocious injustice done by the Hindus to the suppressed classes is admitted generally by even the orthodox Hindu society, there are men, otherwise liberal-minded, so blinded by prejudice that they see no injustice in the treatment meted out to our suppressed countrymen. Thus a correspondent writes :

"I am a very humble follower of yours though I do not claim to belong to the front rank. On the untouchability question I am sorry to confess that I do not feel as strongly as you do. I do not agree with people who say that the untouchables are oppressed and suppressed. I feel it my duty to submit to you that the so-called untouchables have been enjoying their freedom and were well off before. If I survey the past and the present of the Panchamas, I cannot well congratulate them upon their consciousness; it has taken them nowhere. The thirst after the so-called education and for the loaves and fishes of office is being copied by them only to make them worse helots. Any man who abandons manual labour and takes up office or service always changes for the worse. That has been the painful

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us shed them, for they are the true untouchables deserving to be hated and cast out. And let us do penance for our past injustice towards the 'untouchable' brothers by lovingly embracing them. The correspondent does not question the duty of serving the untouchables. How are we to serve them if their very sight offends and pollutes us?

## In Defence of Unapproachability.

A Travancore correspondent writes :

“There seems to be a misunderstanding about the Brahmins and their customs or *acharas*. You praise Ahimsa, but we the Brahmins are the only community that observe it as a religious function. Any one who violates it, is regarded as an outcaste by us. The very association with those who kill or eat flesh is considered by us as sinful. At the approach of the slaughterer, fisherman and toddy extractor, as well as at the touch of the flesh-cater, wine-drinker, and the irreligious, our moral as well as the physical atmosphere becomes poisoned, *Tapas* or religious merit diminishes, and pure magnetism becomes lost.

“This, we consider as pollution, and we have to bathe forthwith. It is by keeping up such rules that the Brahmins have been able to preserve their hereditary virtues so long even though



time and fortune have undergone many changes. If free communication with others be allowed without these restrictions, the Brahmin will gradually degrade himself to the lowest of the outcastes, indulge in the vices in the private, and pretend to be pure trying at the same time to do away with the barriers of restrictions which give him much trouble in keeping his sins secret. We know that many of the nominal Brahmins of today are of this sort, and that they are moving heaven and earth to drag others to their degraded level.

“In a place, where people are grouped together into different communities according to their habits and notions of right and wrong (not as per colour, wealth or power as is wrongly in the West) and located in different centres, according to their professional, social and domestic conveniences, with perceptible demarcation lines as in our motherland, it is not possible for any one to remain unobserved for long, if he changes his habits.

“If on the contrary one is put up in the midst of slaughterers, meateaters and drunkards, it is

impossible for him to maintain himself there, preserving his foreign virtues. Naturally, we seek such surroundings as suit our tastes. Therefore, it is that the surroundings of a Brahmin's abode have also to be preserved physically, morally and religiously pure free from the encroachment of the slaughterers, fishermen, toddy extractors.

"In India profession and the caste-system have been inseparably linked together, and it is therefore natural to believe a man belonging to a caste, to be invariably following that profession.

"These are the grounds on which unapproachability and untouchability have been enjoined on us. These, as mentioned above, not only protect the purity of our line but also acting as a direct social or religious punishment of excommunication on the wrong-doers, and indirectly induces them to give up their bad habits if they want free communication with us.

"You may therefore publicly ask them to renounce their sins and to take up to weaving and spinning along with the necessary religious

observances of bathing regularly, fasting, prayer etc, if they want to destroy their unapproachability in the course of a few years. They should not also associate with those who have not mended their old ways of long. This is the way sanctioned by the Shastras. Since there is no way of verifying the private sins or virtues of a man, it is useless to talk of the mental purities of the one or the mental impurities of another. It is from public habits that we should judge a man's private nature. Therefore, any one, who cannot publicly embrace your or our Mother's Ahimsa-dharma, or at least to the extent of slaughtering, fish or flesh-eating, cannot be considered fit to transcend their hereditary unapproachability. In fact this unapproachability and untouchability are nothing but a practical means of preserving and spreading our Ahimsa Dharma."

Though the question raised by the correspondent has been often dealt with in these columns, it is perhaps necessary to re-expose the fallacy underlying the correspondent's argument. In the first place the claim advanced on behalf of

the Brahmans as to vegetarianism is not wholly true. It is true only regarding the Brahmans of the South. But elsewhere they freely eat fish and in Bengal, Kashmir, etc. even meat. Moreover, in the south all meateaters and fish-eaters are not unapproachables. And even an 'unapproachable' who is severely pure is an out-caste, because he is born in a family unlawfully regarded as 'untouchable' or 'unapproachable.' Do not Brahmans brush shoulders with meateating non-Brahmans if they happen to be persons in authority? Do they not pay respects to the meat-eating Hindu royalty?

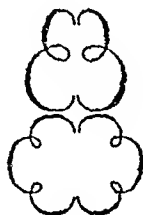
It is surprising and painful to find cultured men like the correspondent in their blind zeal defend an indefensible and tottering system, forgetting the obvious implications of their own argument. The correspondent strains at the *himsaic* 'gnat' of meateating and swallows the trebly *himsaic* camel of deliberate suppression of millions of fellow-beings in order to preserve an imaginary purity. I suggest to the correspondent that a vegetarianism that demands for its protection a degrading excommunication of

others is not worth preserving. Thus preserved it becomes a hot-house growth doomed to perish under the first blast of cold air. I treasure vegetarianism. I am convinced the Brahmans have gained spiritual advancement through their vegetarianism and other self-imposed disciplinary restraints. But when they were at their height, they did not need protection for their purity from without. Every virtue loses its vitality when it becomes incapable of withstanding outside influences.

Moreover, it is too late in the day for Brahmans to claim protection of the type mentioned by the correspondent. Happily the number of Brahmans who not only disdain such protection but who are leading the reform movement at the peril of being persecuted is daily on the increase. And in that lies the best hope of the reform making rapid progress.

The correspondent wants me to preach purity among the suppressed classes. He is evidently no reader of *Young India* or he would have known that I never lose a single opportunity of

preaching purity among them. I make him too a present of the information that they are responding to such effort in a most satisfactory manner. I invite the correspondent to join the ranks of reforms who go in the midst of these long suffering men and women and work among them not as patrons but their true friends.



## The Crime of Caste

In South Africa it is the crime of colour and race for which we are being punished. In India we Hindus punish our co-religionists for the crime of caste. The fifth caste man—the Panchama—is the greatest offender deserving the punishment of untouchability, unapproachability, invisibility and what not. An extraordinary case that was tried in a Madras presidency court brings vividly to light the sad plight of our suppressed countrymen. A simple cleanly-dressed Panchama entered a temple in a perfectly devotional spirit without the slightest intention of hurting anybody's feeling or insulting any religion. He had been in the habit of paying his respects at this temple every year though he did not enter it. But last year in his ecstatic mood he forgot himself and entered the temple. The priest in charge could not distinguish him from the others and therefore accepted his offering. But when he regained self-possession, he was terrified to

find himself in a prohibited place and ran away from the temple. But some who knew him caught him and handed him to the police. The temple authorities when they discovered the crime, had the temple duly purified. Then followed a trial. A Hindu Magistrate convicted him and imposed a fine of Rs 75 or one month's rigorous imprisonment for insulting his own religion ! An appeal was filed. There was an elaborate argument over it. Judgment had to be reserved ! And when conviction was set aside, it was not because the court held that the poor Panchama had a right to enter the temple but because the prosecution in the lower court had forgotten to prove the insult. This is no triumph of justice or truth or religion or morality.

The only consolation to be derived from the successful appeal is that the Panchama will not have to suffer imprisonment for having in his zeal for worship forgotten that he was a prohibited entrant. If however he or his fellow-Panchama again dare to enter the temple, it is highly probable that they would be severely



punished if they are not lynched by those who look down upon them with contempt.

It is a curious situation. We resent, and properly, the treatment meted out to our countrymen in South Africa. We are impatient to establish Swaraj. But we Hindus refuse to see the incongruity in treating a fifth of our own co-religionists as worse than dogs. For dogs are not untouchables. Some of us now-a-days even keep them as drawing-room pets.

What place shall the 'untouchables' occupy in our scheme of Swaraj? If they are to be free from all special restraints and disabilities under Swaraj, why can we not declare their freedom now? And if we are powerless today, shall we be less powerless under Swaraj?

We may shut our eyes and stuff our ears to these questions. But they are of the highest importance to the Panchamas. Surely, judgment will be pronounced against Hinduism, if we as a body do not rise as one man against this social and religious atrocity.

Much has no doubt been done to remove the evil. But it is all too little so long as criminal prosecutions for temple-entry are possible and so long as the suppressed classes continue to be denied the right of entering temples, using public wells, and sending their children freely to national schools. We must yield to them the same rights as we would have the Europeans concede to our countrymen in South Africa.

But this case is not without its relieving features. The quashing of the conviction is no doubt some consolation. But the best consolation lies in the fact of so many *Savarna* Hindus actively interesting themselves in the poor Panchama's behalf. The appeal would not have been noted, if some one had not gone to the accused's assistance. Not the least interesting feature of the case was the fact of C. Rajagopalachari arguing the appeal,—a fit application in my opinion of the principle of non-cooperation. Being in the court, when he got the opportunity, he would have been like a Pharisee if he had sat there stiff gloating over the sanctimonious satisfaction

of non-cooperating whilst the accused could have been discharged by his intervention. The Panchma knew nothing of non-cooperation. He had appealed to avoid payment of fine or imprisonment. It is to be wished that every educated Hindu will constitute himself the 'untouchable' friend and regard it his duty to free him from the tyranny of custom masquerading under the name of religion. Not the entry of a Panchama into a temple but the brand of prohibition against him is an insult to religion and humanity.



## I Cry to Conquer.

[During the Kathiawar tour, in 1925, Gandhiji laid deep stress for the removal of untouchability and passionately appealed to caste Hindus to purge Hinduism of this evil. The one that he made in reply to an address, given by the Representative Assembly and handed to him by the Thakore Sâheb of Rajkot, is given here. In order that the references in the speech may be properly understood I shall mention here one or two facts relating to the occasion. Before the address was read out, the Shashtris of the State, gave their blessings to Gandhiji in Sanskrit verses composed for the occasion. The address eulogised Gandhiji's services in the cause of Hindu-Muslim Unity, and made appreciative mention of Truth and Non-Violence as his guiding principles, but was silent about his Khaddar work and his Anti-untouchability propaganda. It was enclosed in a massive gold-gilt costly casket of silver.]

As I entered the Darbargarh today my memory went back to an incident of my childhood which happened on this very spot and which I have treasured all these years. It was customary in those days, on the occasion of a royal wedding, to send a deputation to bridal states, before the wedding took place. The sons of the Minister, would form part of the deputation. My father who was then Minister, however had made it a point never to send his boys on such occasions. At the time which I am recalling today, deputations were to go to

Kanpur and Dharmpur. My father, of course, kept us back. My good mother, who was more worldly and did not want her children to be robbed of the prizes of position, pressed my brother and me to go to the late Thakore Saheb and cry before him. When he asked us what we were after, we were to tell him that we wanted to go to Dharmpur. We followed the advice and we were sent not to Dharmpur but to Kanpur. Today also I must cry to conquer. I shall cry not for name and fame or wealth and position. Fame, said the Shastris who blessed me, was ever a virgin in as much as she failed to find a suitable match for her, and they wished that that coy damsel should at last wed with me. May she ever remain 'in a single blessedness'. For I am sure that were she to marry me I would be undone. I cry not, therefore, for fame, but one or two things you have withheld from me.

I am thankful for all the kind things you have said about me, and more for the kinder sentiments expressed by the Thakore Saheb. I wish I was worthy of them. I do not for a

moment flatter myself with the belief that I am all I have been described to be. I am one of the people and want to continue as such. Let me pray that I may remain untouched by the honour you have done me.

Whilst, then, I thank you I must register my complaint about one or two things. You have omitted all mention of them in the address, whether purposely or not I do not know. You have rightly mentioned Truth and Non-violence as my guiding principles. I would indeed be a lifeless corpse, without those two life-principles. But I am surprised that you have studiously omitted all reference to the two things, pursuit of which is inseparable from the practice of Truth and Non-violence. I refer to Khaddar and removal of untouchability. These two things are in a manner more important than Hindu-Muslim Unity, for that unity is impossible without them. So long as we have not rid Hinduism of the stain of untouchability, it is impossible to achieve real Hindu-Muslim Unity.

A very thoughtful Musalman once told me that so long as there was untouchability in

"Hinduism" it was difficult for Musalmans to entertain any regard for that faith or its followers. I have repeated times without number that an 'untouchable' community is unknown to the *Shastras*. The weaver and the scavenger are not classed as untouchables by the *Shastras*. I am both. My mother was certainly a scavenger in as much as she cleaned me when I was a child. But she did not, on that account, become an untouchable. Why then should a *Bhangi*, who renders similar necessary service, be regarded untouchable? Even if the whole world of Shashtris were to be against me I would proclaim from the house-tops that they are wrong in considering untouchability to be part of the Hindu religion.

And in this connection I take leave to mention one thing that both pleased and pained me. I was glad to notice that the 'Shashtris' Blessing' was the first item of to-day's programme. But I wondered whether there was a false ring about them. Their praise meant endorsement of my work on untouchability. Did they approve of my activity about it or did

they merely obey the presumed or ~~declared~~ will of the Thakore Saheb that they should bless me? The benediction rang untrue because of the omission in your address of my campaign against untouchability. I beseech you, Thakore Saheb, to be kind to them, to befriend the depressed people of your state, even as Rama of old befriended Shabri and Guha, both presumably untouchables. I ask you to ensure them admssion into schools, temples and all public places.

I was distressed to find the Boy Scouts clad in foreign :*Khakhi*. I did expect that these atleast should be clad in Khaddar. If you have Khaddar uniform for your Boy Scouts and your police, you can relieve the misery of the poor, the untouchables and the indigent widow. I entreat you, therefore Thakur Saheb, and members of the Representative Assembly, to resolve to wear Khaddar and to have Khaddar uniforms for all the state employees. You have given me rich casket. I have no strong room nor safe to keep it in. Nor have I men to keep charge of the strong room or the



## The Bleeding Wound

safe, if I had them. I have thus to hand over all such costly presents to friends like Jamnalal Bajaj to care of them for public use. But I have room enough to store Khaddar and I therefore beg Khaddar of every one I meet. I would not hesitate to ask even Lord Reading to dress himself and his orderly in Khaddar.

Your sword, worthy ruler, is a mighty symbol. Your path, is like your sword's edge, you may not depart by even a hair's breadth from the straight and narrow path of truth. It is an eternal reminder of the fact that in your state there should not be a single drunkard, and no impure man or women. It is your duty to put strength where there is weakness and cleanliness where there is dirt. Befriend the poor and the oppressed. Your sword is not meant for others' necks, it is meant for your own. You can tell your people that the moment you exceed the bounds of your authority they may put you to the sword. I speak in these terms to you, as I owe a duty to you, Thakore Saheb. Your father made my father an unconditional gift of some land. I have thus

eaten your salt and I should not be worth the salt, if I did not on this solemn occasion invite your attention to what are a prince's obvious duties. The honour you have done me lays me under a deep debt of gratitude. I prize the relief of the poor and the oppressed and the untouchable more than all that honour. Tell me that you have introduced numerous spinning-wheels in your villages and schools, that you have introduced Khaddar in all your departments, and that all your public institutions and places are thrown open to the untouchables, and I shall feel doubly honoured and in reverence bow down my head to you. May God bless you with strength to serve your people.

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## Man's Inhumanity to Man.

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The following is an extract from *Navajivan* of a most disgraceful case of calculated inhumanity of a medical man towards the dying wife of a member of the suppressed class in a Kathiawad village. Sjt. Amritlal Thakkar who is responsible for giving the details of the case has withheld the names of the place and parties for fear of the poor suppressed class school-master being further molested by the medical man. I wish, however, that the names will be disclosed. Time must come when the suppressed class people will have to be encouraged by us to dare to suffer further hardships and tyranny. Their sufferings are already too great for any further sufferings to be really felt. Public opinion cannot be roused over grievances that cannot be verified and traced to their sources. I do not know the rules of the Medical Council in Bombay. I know that in other places a medical practitioner, who refused to attend

before his fees were paid, would be answerable to the Council and would be liable to have his name removed from the Council's list and be otherwise subject to disciplinary action. Fees are no doubt exactable; but proper attendance upon patients is the first duty of a medical practitioner. The real inhumanity, however, if the facts stated are true, consists in the practitioner refusing to enter the untouchable's quarters, refusing himself to see the patient, and refusing himself to apply the thermometer. And if the doctrine of untouchability can ever be applied in any circumstances, it is certainly applicable to this member of the profession which he has disgraced. But I am hoping that there is some exagegration in the statement made by Sjt. Thakkar's corresphndent and, if there is none, that the medical practitioner will himself come forth and make ample amends to the society which he has so outraged by his inhuman conduct."

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## The Bleeding Wound

(Syt. Thakkar's Letter)

### Read, Reflect and Weep

There is a school for the children of the suppressed classes in a village in Kathiawad. The teacher is a cultured, patriotic man belonging to the *dhedh* or Weaver (untochable) class. He owes his education to the compulsory education policy of His Highness the Gayikwad and has been doing his little bit for the amelioration of his community. He is a man of cleanly habits and refined manners, so that no one can recognise him as belonging to the untouchable class. But because he has had the fortune or misfortune of teaching the children of his own community in a conservative village in Kathiawad, everyone regards him as an untouchable. But unmindful of that he has been silently working away. There are some moments, however, when the most patient men living under intolerable conditions may give vent to his agony and indignation, which are evident in the following letters from the schoolmaster. Every little sentence in it is surcharged with pathos. I have purposely omitted the names of the village and all people mentioned in the letter, lest the schoolmaster should come into further trouble.

I

"*Namaskar*. My wife was delivered of a child on the 5th instant. On the 7th she was taken ill, had motions, lost her speech, had hard breathing and swelling on the chest, and her ribs were aching painfully. I went to call in Dr.—, but he said: 'I will not come to the untouchables' quarters. I will not examine her either.' Then I approached the Nagarshet—and the Garasia Darbar—, and requested them to use their good offices for me. They came and on the Nagarsheth standing surety for me for the payment of Rs. 2 as the doctor's fee, and on condition that the patient would be brought outside the untouchables' quarters, he consented to come. He came, we took out the woman who had a baby only two days ago. Then the doctor gave his thermometer to a Musalman who gave it to me. I applied the thermometer and then returned it to the Musalman who gave it to the doctor. It was about eight o'clock, and having inspected the thermometer in the light of a lamp, he said: 'She has pneumonia and suffocations'. After this the doctor left and sent medicine. I got linseed from the market and we are applying linseed poultice and giving her the medicine. The doctor would not condescend to examine her, simply looked at her

from a distance. Of course I gave Rs. 2 for his fee. It is a serious illness. Every-thing is in His hands."

## II

"The light in my life has gone out. She passed away at 2 o'clock this afternoon."

Comment is needless. What shall one say about the inhumanity of the doctor who being an educated man refused to apply the thermometer except through the medium of Musalman to purify it and who treated an ailing woman lying in for two days worse than a dog or a cat? What shall one say of the society that tolerates this inhumanity? One can but reflect and weep.



## Temple Entry Satyagraha\*

Whilst the Working Committee was in session during the last week I had several conversations with representatives from Kerala and other Congress workers about many questions arising in connection with temple entry Satyagraha. Instead of correcting the report produced by the interviewers in the form of questions and answers I am giving below what I think should be the answer to their questions. The answers will be found so framed as to render unnecessary the questions being stated.

1. It is necessary to bear in mind that the question of removal of untouchability though it has a political significance of the greatest importance is essentially and predominantly a religious question to be solved by the Hindus and as such for them it overshadows even the

\*This important article was dictated by Gandhiji under very heavy pressure of work in hourly expectation of arrest and handed over to the editor of Y. I., before his arrest in the beginning of this year.



political aspect. That is to say the duty of touchables in respect of removal of untouchability can never be subordinated to any political exigencies, hence the present political situation must not in any way be allowed to postpone the endeavour to end untouchability.

2. In a religious and righteous cause the reformer has to face all consequences and even take the risk of temporary alienation of the sympathy of privileged classes. Those, therefore, who believe untouchability is a curse to be removed at all cost will not abate their effort for fear of finding themselves in a hopeless minority.

3. If the present *pujaris* of temples strike work and refuse to perform the ceremonial required they should be replaced promptly and if the particular caste which has supplied the *pujaris* fail to furnish a substitute I would not hesitate to find the priest from any other caste so long as he has the requisite qualifications and conviction. The fact is that so far as I am aware the majority of the existing *pujaris* are

too dependent on this service for their maintenance to continue the strike for any length of time. That the right of performing *pūja* is hereditary does not affect my opinion because if the possessor himself of such a right, for any cause whatsoever, refuses to exercise the right he has only himself to thank.

4. If temple authorities offer to set apart a corner for untouchables it should not be considered as sufficient. No restriction against untouchables which is not applicable to other non-Brahman Hindus can be tolerated. But a distant corner may be set apart for those who do not want to mix with the untouchables. These people then become untouchables by choice.

5. We may not force open barricades. That would be a species of violence and it will not do to say that barricades are inanimate things, for the hands that put up the barricades were animate.

6. From the foregoing it will be clear that belief in temples should be a condition precedent

to offering Satyagraha regarding temple entry. Temple entry is a religious right. Entry, therefore, by any other person cannot be called Satyagraha. At the time of Vaikam Satyagraha, when Mr. George Joseph went to jail, I sent him word that he was wrong. He agreed with me, promptly apologised, and came out of jail. Temple entry Satyagraha is a penance on the part of the touchable Hindu. He is the sinner and he has therefore to do the penance by inviting punishment on himself for endeavouring to take these untouchable co-religionists with him to the temple. Therefore non-Hindus can only offer help other than Satyagraha. For instance whilst the other communities helped the Sikhs at the time of Gurudwara movement in various ways Satyagraha was and could be offered only by the Sikhs who believed in the Akhanda Path.

In my opinion untouchables should not alone offer Satyagraha. It should be led by touchable reformers. This is a matter of expedience. There may come a time when untouchables may offer Satyagraha by themselves. The idea behind the opinion here expressed is that public

opinion amongst touchable Hindus should be sufficiently alive and active before Satyagraha is taken up at all. It is a weapon whose use depends for success upon the gathering of public opinion. Therefore its use is invariably preceded by all known orthodox remedies.

7. There can be no entry demanded in temples on private *bona fide* property. When a man allows free use to the public of a temple erected on a private property but bars the entry of untouchables alone it ceases to be a private temple.

8. It has been suggested that temple entry through Satyagraha should be postponed altogether and effected by legislative enactment. I wholly dissent from the view. Legislative enactment as a rule, and certainly always under democracy, follows the formation of public opinion, and for the formation of public opinion I know no swifter remedy than real Satyagraha properly handled.

## The Root Cause

A correspondent asks:—

“Don't you think that the success of the present foreign government is due to the oppression of the poor, the weak, of the so-called untouchables by high classes?”

This oppression by us of our own kith and kin is certainly the root cause. It is a fall from spirituality. The curse of foreign domination and the attendant exploitation is the justest retribution meted out by God to us for our exploitation of a sixth of our own race and their studied degradation in the sacred name of religion. Hence is it that I have put the removal of untouchability as an indispensable condition of attainment of Swaraj. Slave-holders ourselves, we have no business to quarrel with our own slavery if we are not prepared unconditionally to enfranchise our own slaves. We must first cast out the beam of untouchability from our own eyes before we attempt to remove the mote from that of our ‘masters’.\*

\*From Y, I. of 13th October 1921.-

# Appendices



# SOME OBITER DICTA

( 1 )

## Untouchability

( 1 )

"Surely when Hindus have with a deliberate and conscious effort, not by way of policy but for self-purification, removed the taint of 'untouchability', that act will give the nation a new strength born of consciousness of having done the right thing, and will therefore contribute to the attainment of Swaraj. We are powerless to-day because we have lost the power of cohesion. When we learn to regard these fifty millions of outcasts as our own, we shall learn the rudiments of what it is to be one people. ....Hinduism must be poor stuff, if it requires to be protected by an artificial wall of untouchability.

If 'untouchability' and caste are convertible terms, the sooner caste perishes the better for all concerned. But I am satisfied that caste, if it is another word for Varna, is a healthy institution. The modern caste, with its arrogant exclusiveness, is as good as gone. The innumerable subdivisions are destroying themselves with a rapidity of which we can have no conception.

It is our fault and shame that these suppressed classes are living outside towns and villages, and that they are leading a wretched life. Even as we rightly charge the British rulers with our helplessness and lack of initiative, so let us admit the guilt of the highcaste Hindus in making the 'untouchables' what they are to-day. The Alpha of our spiritual training must begin by our coming down from the Himalayan height and feeling one with them in love."

*Young India, 25th March, 1926.*



## The Bleeding Wound

( 2 )

Untouchability is repugnant to reason and to the instinct of mercy, pity or love. A religion that establishes the worship of the cow cannot possibly countenance or warrant a cruel and inhuman boycott of human beings. And I should be content to be torn to pieces rather than disown the suppressed classes. Hindus will certainly never deserve freedom, nor get it, if they allow their noble religion to be disgraced by the retention of the taint of untouchability. And as I love Hindunism dearer than life itself, the taint has become for me an intolerable burden. Let us not deny God by denying to a fifth of our race the right of association on an equal footing.

*Hinduism : Young India, Oct. 12, 1921*

( 3 )

I consider untouchability to be a heinous crime against humanity. It is not a sign of self-restraint but an arrogant assumption of superiority. It has served no useful purpose and it has suppressed, as nothing else in Hinduism has, vast numbers of the human race, who are not only every bit as good as ourselves, but are rendering in many walks of life an essential service to the country. It is a sin of which the sooner Hinduism purges itself the better it is for itself, if it is to be recognised as an honorable and elevating religion. I know no argument in favour of its retention and I have no hesitation in rejecting scriptural authority of a doubtful character in order to support a sinful institution. Indeed I would reject all authority if it is in conflict with sober reason or the dictates of the heart. Authority sustains and ennobles the weak when it

is the hand-work of reason, but it degrades them when it supplants reason sanctified by the still small voice within.

*Young India, 8th December, 1920.*

( 4 )

Untouchability is a sin, a grievous crime, and will eat up Hinduism, if the latter does not kill the snake in time. Untouchables should no longer be the outcasts of Hinduism. They should be regarded as honoured members of Hindu society and should belong to the Varna for which their occupation fits them.

*Young India, 4th June, 1931.*

( 5 )

Untouchability is the sin of the Hindus. They must suffer for it, they must purify themselves, they must pay the debt they owe their suppressed brothers and sisters. Theirs must be the glory when they have purged themselves of the black sin.

*Young India, 1st May, 1932.*

( 6 )

The fight against untouchability is a religious fight. It is a fight for the recognition of human dignity. It is a fight for a mighty reform in Hinduism. It is a fight against the entrenched citadels of orthodoxy. Victory which is a certainty is worth the patience and the sacrifice, the band of devoted Young Hindus is giving to it. The process of waiting is the process of self-purification for the youngmen engaged in the fight. If they persist they will be ranked among the makers of India of the future.

*Young India, 5th February, 1925.*

( 2 )

## Who is Untouchable ?

Untouchability is a snake with a thousand mouths through each of which it shows its poisonous fangs. It defies definition. It needs no sanction from Mann or the other ancient law-givers. It has its own local *Smriti*. Thus in Almôda a whole class of people, whose occupation is, even according to the Sanatan Dharm so-called, innocent, are untouchables. They are all cultivators owning their own holdings. They are called *shilpi*, i. e., farmers. Another similar class of people called Boras suffer in the same manner although they do not even eat carrion or take liquor and observe all the rules of sanitation as well as any. Tradition has condemned these as untouchables, Hinduism that refuses to think accepts the tradition unquestioningly and exposes itself to merited ridicule and worse. Reformers are trying to cope with the evil. I feel, however, that much more drastic methods are needed than are employed to rid Hinduism of the blot. We are needlessly afraid to wound the susceptibilities of orthodoxy. We have to shed the fear, if we expect to end the evil in our own geneartion. This untouchability naturally recoils on the heads of those who are responsible for it.<sup>1</sup>

1. From "Almôda Impressions", written at the time of U.P. Tour in 1929.

## Let Us Be Humble !

I Would however warn the Hindu brethren against the tendency which one sees nowadays of exploiting the suppressed classes for a political end. To remove untouchability is a penance that caste Hindus owe to Hinduism and to themselves. The purification required is not of untouchables but of the so-called superior castes.. There is no vice that is special to the untouchables, not even dirt and insanitation. It is our arrogance which blinds us 'superior' Hindus to our own blemishes and which magnifies those of our downtrodden brethren whom we have suppressed and whom we keep under suppression. Religions like nations are being weighed in the balance. God's grace and revelation are the monopoly of no race or nation. They descend equally upon all who wait upon God. That religion and that nation will be blotted out of the face of the earth which pins its faith to injustice, untruth or violence. *God is Light not darkness, God is Love not hate, God is Truth, not untruth.* God alone is Great. We His creatures are but dust. Let us be humble and recognise the place of the lowliest of His creatures. Krishna honoured Sudama in his rags as he honoured no one else. Love is the root of religion or sacrifice and this perishable body is the root of self or irreligion, says Tulsidas. Whether we win Swaraj or not, the Hindus have to purify themselves before they can hope to revive the Vedic philosophy and make it a living reality.<sup>1</sup>

1. From the Presidential address, at the 39th. session of the Congress, Belgaum.

( 4 )

## The Duty of the Hindus

It is the bounden duty of all Hindus to remove untouchability. Here also no interference need be feared from any prince. I firmly believe that Hindus would regain the strength of soul if by serving the suppressed and receiving their hearts' blessing they carried on a process of self-purification. Untouchability is a great blot on Hinduism. It is necessary to remove that blot. The Hindu who serves the suppressed will be a saviour of Hinduism and will enshrine himself in the hearts of his suppressed brothers and sisters.

( 5 )

## Service of the Suppressed

( Mahatmaji contributed a fine article on the Service of the Suppressed in Young India, dated April 19 , 1928. Following relevant excerpts are taken from the article.---Editor. )

( 1 )

### *Our failings*

I addressed two meetings last month, one under the auspices of the Sweepers' Mahajan and the other a gathering of the children of the Labour Union Schools.

The sweepers' meeting was remarkable for the things it brought to light. I heard them sing their songs With flawless pronunciation. They were comparatively unlettered, but no one who listened to their songs could say that they belonged to the suppressed classes. But they are indebted, underpaid, and addicted to drink. Most of them beg and live on leavings from plates given to

1 From the speech delivered at the 3rd Kathiawad Political Conference held at Bhavnagar on the 8th Jan. 1925.

them by Hindus of higher castes. Their condition makes the conclusion irresistible that we the so-called high caste Hindus are responsible for their failings, and only the inherent strength of Hinduism is responsible for their good points. Hinduism has helped them to retain some of their culture inspite of the oppression they have laboured under. They would never have been reduced to their present state if we had regarded them as our own kith and kin.

( 2 )

### *Untouchables among Untouchables*

I addressed a third meeting which was full of painful experience. There is a suppressed class night-school under the Gujrat Vidyapith, conducted by the students of the Vidyalyaya. They take considerable pains over the school, which until a short time ago had a very large attendance of *dhed* children. The teachers thought of the sweepers' children and induced the sweepers to send their children to the school but as soon as these came most of the *dheds* withdrew their children from the school. The teachers, therefore, turned me to find a way out of the situation. So I went there. Very few *dhed* parents attended the meeting. One of them whom I tried to tackle said frankly taking his stand on the traditional religion. 'How may a *dhed* touch a sweeper?' 'But if the touch of the sweeper pollutes the *dhed*, why should the higher castes touch the *dheds*?' I asked. 'We never asked them to do so,' he quickly rejoined, and floored me.

This is how we are hoist with our own petard. If untouchability had been allowed to go on unchecked, each one of us should have considered the other untouchable and we should have been doomed. But thank God, in spite of the orthodox *dheds* and *bania* and *brahmans* the snake of untouchability is breathing its last.

The teachers of-course ought to adhere to their resolve. They should not be angry with the *dheds*, but neither should they let go a single sweeper boy for the sake of the *dhed* boys. Let them shower all their love and attention on the sweeper boys, and their duty ends. Their determination and faith will melt the hearts of the *dheds*, who, as soon as they find the sweepers' children growing in cleanliness and character, will not help sending their own children too. The anti-untouchability worker has to begin at the lower-most rung of the ladder. There are I know some 'reformers' who are apt to think: 'Better reform and serve our own castes before we reform and serve the *dheds*. This way of thinking betrays impatience and ignorance, impatience because we fight shy of obstacles, and ignorance because we forget that all other reform of Hinduism is nothing worth until the main reform, viz, the removal of untouchability is achieved. This blot poisons the whole system, even as a drop of arsenic would poison a tankful of milk. Remove this and you open the door for other reforms; retain this and you render other reforms negatory. The disease of a consumptive unless the root cause is tackled remains just the same whether you remove or do not remove a few abscesses on his body.

## Brahman Non-Brahman

"I have for both the parties two counsels of perfection which I can lay before you. To the Brahman I will say : "Seeing that you are repositories of all knowledge and embodiments of sacrifice and that you have chosen the life of mendicancy, give up all that the Non-Brahmans want and be satisfied with what they may leave for you." But the modern Brahman would, I know, summarily reject my Non-Brahman interpretation of his *Dharma*. To the Non-Brahman I say: "Seeing that you have got numbers on your side, seeing that you have got wealth on your side, what is it that you are worrying about? Resisting as you are, and as you must, untouchability, do not be guilty of creating a new untouchability in your midst. In your haste, in your blindness, in your anger against the Brahmins, you are trying to trample under foot the whole of the culture which you have inherited from ages past. With a stroke of the pen, may be at the point of the sword, you are impatient to rid Hinduism of its bed-rock. Being dissatisfied and properly dissatisfied with the husk of Hinduism, you are in danger of losing even the kernel, life itself. You in your impatience seem to think that there is absolutely nothing to be said about *Varnashrama*. Some of you are ready even to think that in defending *Varnashrama* I am also labouring under a delusion. Make no mistake about it. They who say this have not even taken the trouble of understanding what I mean by *Varnashrama*."



*My Varnashrama Dharma*

'It is a universal law, stated in so many words by Hinduism. It is a law of spiritual economies. Nations of the West and Islam itself unwittingly are obliged to follow that law. It has nothing to do with superiority or inferiority. The customs about eating, drinking and marriage are no integral part of *Varnashrama Dharma*. It was a law discovered by your ancestors and my ancestors, the *rishis* who saw that if they were to give the best part of their lives to God and to the world, and not to themselves, they must recognise that it is the law of heredity. It is a law designed to set free man's energy for highest pursuits in life. What true Non-Brahmans should therefore set about doing is not to undermine the very foundations on which they are sitting, but to clean all the sweepings that have gathered on the foundation and make it perfectly clean. Fight by all means the monster that passes for *Varnashrama* to-day and you will find me working side by side with you. My *Varnashrama* enables me to dine with anybody who will give me clean food, be he Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Parsi, whatever he is. My *Varnashrama* accommodates a pariah girl under my own roof as my own daughter. My *Varnashrama* accommodates many Pancham families with whom I dine with the greatest pleasure,—to dine with whom is a privilege. My *Varnashrama* refuses to bow the head before the greatest potentate on earth, but my *Varnashrama* compels me to bow down my head in all humility before knowledge, before purity, before every person, where I see God face to face.

APPENDIX B.

# MISREPRESENTATION

( 1 )

It seems to have been represented that I am opposed to any representation of the Untouchables on the legislatures. This is a travesty of the truth. What I have said and what I must repeat is that I am opposed to their special representation. I am convinced that this can do them no good and may do much harm. But the Congress is wedded to adult franchise. Therefore, millions of them can be placed on the Voters' roll. It is impossible to conceive that with Untouchability fast disappearing nominees of these Voters can be boycotted by the others. But what these people need more than election to the legislatures is protection from social and religious persecution. Custom which is often more powerful than law, has brought them to a degradation of which every thinking Hindu has need to feel ashamed and to do penance. I should, therefore, have the most drastic legislation rendering criminal all the special persecution to which these fellow-countrymen of mine are subjected by the so-called superior classes. Thank God the conscience of Hindu has been stirred, and Untouchability will soon be a relic of our sinful past.<sup>1</sup>

( 2 )

## *'The unkindest cut of All' !*

I can understand the claims advanced by other Minorities, but the claims advanced on behalf of the untouchables, is to me the "unkindest cut of all"! It means perpetual bar sinister. I would not sell the vital interests of the untouchables even for the sake of winning the freedom of India. I claim myself, in my own person, to represent the vast mass of the untouchables. Here I speak not

1. Concluding portion of the speech, delivered at the Minorities Committee of the Round Table Conference.

## Misrepresentation

merely on behalf of the Congress, but I speak on my own behalf, and I claim that I would get, if there was a referendum of the untouchables, their vote, and that I would top the poll. And I would work from one end of India to the other to tell the untouchables that separate electorates and separate reservation is not the way to remove this bar sinister. Let this Committee and let the whole world know that today there is a body of Hindu reformers who feel that this is a shame, not of the untouchables, but of orthodox Hinduism, and they are, therefore, pledged to remove this blot of untouchability. We do not want on our register and on our census untouchables classified as a separate class. Sikhs may remain as such in perpetuity, so may Moslems, so may Europeans. Would untouchables remain untouchables in perpetuity? I would far rather that Hinduism died than that untouchability lived. Therefore, with all my regard for Dr. Ambedkar, and for his desire to see the untouchables uplifted, with all my regard for his ability I must say that here is a great error under which he has laboured and perhaps the bitter experiences he has undergone have for the moment warped his judgment. It hurts me to have to say this but I would be untrue to the cause of untouchables, which is as dear to me as life itself, if I did not say it. I will not bargain away their rights for the kingdom of the whole world. I am speaking with a due sense of responsibility when I say it is not a proper claim which is registered by Dr. Ambedkar, when he seeks to speak for the whole of the untouchables in India. It will create a division in Hinduism which I cannot possibly look forward to with any satisfaction whatsoever. I do not mind the untouchables being converted to Islam or Christianity. I should tolerate that but I cannot possibly tolerate what is in store for Hinduism if there are these two divisions set up in every village. Those who speak of political rights of untouchables do not know India and do not know how Indian society is to-day constructed. Therefore, I want to say with all the emphasis that I can command that if I was the only person to resist this thing I will resist it with my life.<sup>1</sup>

1. From the speech, delivered at the last meeting of the Minorities Committee.

# ALL ABOUT THE GREAT FAST

## Text of Correspondence

( 1 )

*Letter from Mr. Gandhi to Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India, dated Yerwada Central Prison, March 11, 1932:-*

Dear Sir Samuel,

You will perhaps recollect that at the end of my speech at the R. T. C. when the Minorities claim was presented, I had said that I should resist with my life the grant of separate electorate to the Depressed Classes. This was not said in the heat of the moment, nor by way of rhetoric. It was meant to be a serious statement.

In pursuance of that statement I had hoped on my return to India, to mobilise public opinion against separate electorates at any rate for the Depressed Classes. But it was not to be.

From newspapers I am permitted to read, I observe that any moment His Majesty's Government may declare their decision. At first, I had thought that if the decision was found to create separate electorates for the Depressed Classes, I should take such steps as I might then consider necessary to give effect to my vow. But I felt that it would be unfair to the British Government for me to act without giving previous notice. Naturally, they could not attach the significance I give to my statement.

*Concern for Untouchables*

I need hardly reiterate all the objections I have to the creation of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. I feel as if I was one of them. Their case stands on a wholly different footing from that of others. I am not against their representation in legislatures. I should favour every one of their adults, male and female being registered as voters, irrespective of education or property qualifications, even though the franchise test may be strieter for others. But I hold that separate electorate is harmful for them and for Hinduism, whatever it may be from a purely political standpoint. To appreciate the harm that separate electorates would do them, one has to know how they are distributed amongst the so-called caste Hindus and how dependent they are on the latter. So far as Hinduism is concerned, separate electorate would simply vivisect and disrupt it. For me the question of these classes is predominantly moral and religious. The political aspect, important though it is, dwindles into insignificance compared to the moral and religious issue. You will have to appreciate my feelings in this matter by remembering that I have been interested in the condition of these classes from my boyhood and have more than once staked my all for their sake. I say this not to pride myself in any way, for I feel that no penance the caste Hindus may do can any way compensate for the calculated degradation to which they have consigned the Depressed Classes for centuries. But I know that separate electorate is neither a penance nor any remedy for the crushing degradation they have groined under.

### *Fast Unto Death*

I therefore respectfully inform His Majesty's Government that *in the event of their decision creating separate electorate for the Depressed Classes I must fast unto death.*<sup>1</sup>

I am painfully conscious of the fact that such a step whilst I am a prisoner must cause grave embarrassment to His Majesty's Government and that it will be regarded by many as highly improper on the part of one holding my position to introduce into the political field, methods which they would describe as hysterical, if not much worse. All I can urge in defence is that for me the contemplated step is not a method; it is a part of my being. It is a call of conscience which I dare not disobey even though it may cost whatever reputation for sanity I may possess.

So far as I can see now, my discharge from imprisonment would not make the duty of fasting any the less imperative.

I am hoping, however, all my fears are wholly unjustified and the British Government have no intention whatever of creating separate electorate for the Depressed Classes.

### *Brutal Repression*

It is perhaps as well for me to refer to another matter that is agitating me and may also enforce a similar fast. It is the way repression is going. I have no notion when I may receive a shock that would compel the sacrifice. Repression appears to me to be crossing what might

<sup>1</sup> Italics mine. -Editor.

be called legitimate bounds. Governmental terrorism is spreading through the land. Both English and Indian officials are being brutalised. The latter, high and low, are becoming demoralised by reason of Government regarding as meritorious disloyalty to people and inhuman conduct towards their own kith and kin. The latter are being cowed down. Free speech has been stifled. Goondaism is being practiced in the name of law and order. Women, who have come out for public service, stand in fear of their honour being insulted.

And all this, as it seems to me, is being done in order to crush the spirit of freedom which the Congress represents. Repression is not confined to punishing civil breaches of the common law. It goads the people to break newly made orders of autocracy designed for the most part to humiliate them.

### *Shibboleth of Democracy*

In all these doings, as I read them, I see no spirit of democracy. Indeed, my recent visit to England has confirmed my opinion that your democracy is a superficial circumscribed thing. In the weightiest matters, decisions are taken by individuals or groups without any reference to Parliament, and these have been ratified by members having but a vague notion of what they were doing. Such was the case with Egypt, the war of 1914 and such is the case with India. My whole being rebels against the idea that in a system called democratic one man should have unfettered power of affecting the destiny of an ancient people numbering over 300 millions, and that his decisions

can be enforced by mobilising the most terrible forces of destruction. To me, this is the negation of democracy.

### *Embittering Relations*

And this repression cannot be prolonged without further embittering the already bitter relations between the two peoples. In so far as I am responsible and can hold it, how am I to arrest the process? Not by stopping Civil Disobedience. For me it is an article of faith. I regard myself by nature a democrat. The democracy of my conception is wholly inconsistent with the use of physical force for enforcing its will. Civil Resistance, therefore, has been conceived to be a proper substitute for physical force, to be used wherever generally the latter is held necessary or justifiable. It is a process of self-suffering and a part of the plan is that in given circumstances a civil-resister must sacrifice himself even by fasting to a finish. That moment has not yet arrived for me. I have no undeniable call from within for such a step. But events happening outside are alarming enough to agitate my fundamental being. Therefore, in writing to you about the possibility of fast regarding the Depressed Classes, I felt I would be untrue to myself if I did not tell you also there was another possibility, not remote, of such a fast.

Needless to say from my side absolute secrecy has been maintained about all the correspondence I have carried on with you. Of course Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Mahadev Desai who have just been sent to join us, know all about it. But you will no doubt make whatever use you wish of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

(Ed.) M. K. GANDHI



## The Bleeding Wound

( 2 )

*Letter dated April 13, 1932, from Sir Samuel Hoare to Mr. Gandhi.*

DEAR MR. GANDHI,

I write in answer to your letter of March, 11 and I say at-once that I realise fully the strength of your feeling upon the question of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. I can only say that we intend to give any decision that may be necessary solely and only upon the merits of the case. As you are aware Lord Lothian's Committee has not yet completed its tour, and it must be some weeks before we can receive any conclusions at which it may have arrived. When we receive the report, we shall have to give the most careful consideration to its recommendations and we shall not give any decision until we have taken into account in addition to the views expressed by the Committee, the views that you and those who think with you have so forcibly expressed. I feel sure if you were in our position you would be taking exactly the same action we intend to take. You would await the Committee's report, you would then give it your fullest consideration and before arriving at the final decision you would take into account the views that have been expressed on both sides of the controversy. More than this I cannot say. Indeed, I do not imagine you would expect me to say more.

As to the ordinances I can only repeat what I have already said, both publicly and privately. I am convinced, it was essential to impose them in the face of the delibe-

rate attack upon the very foundations of ordered government. I am also convinced both the Government of India and the local governments are not abusing their extensive powers, and are doing everything possible to prevent excessive or vindictive action. We shall not keep the emergency measures in force any longer than we are obliged to for the purpose of maintaining the essentials of law and order and protecting our officials and other classes of the community against terrorist outrages.

Yours Truly,

(Sd) SAMUEL HOARE

( 3 )

*Letter from Mr. Gandhi, Yerarda Central Prison, dated August 18, 1932, to the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald.*

Dear friend,

There can be no doubt Sir Samuel Hoare has showed you and the Cabinet my letter to him of March 11 on the question of representation of the "Depressed" Classes. That letter should be treated as a part of this letter, and be read together with this.

I have read the British Government's decision on the representation of Minorities, and have slept over it. In pursuance of my letter to Sir Samuel Hoare and my declaration at the meeting of the Minorities Committee of the Round Table Conference on November 13, 1931 at St. James' Palace, I have to resist your decision with my life. The only way I can do so is by declaring perpetual fast unto death from food of any kind save water with or without salt and soda. This fast will cease, if during its

## The Bleeding Wound

progress the British Government of its own motion or under pressure of public opinion revise their decision and withdraw their scheme of communal electorates for the Depressed Classes, whose representatives should be elected by general electorates under common franchise, no matter how wide it is.

### *To Begin on Sept. 20*

The proposed fast will come into operation in the ordinary course from the noon of Sept. 20 next, unless the said decision is in the meanwhile revised in the manner suggested above.

I am asking the authorities here to cable the text of this letter to you, so as to give you ample notice. But in any case I am leaving sufficient time for this letter to reach you in time by the slowest route.

I also ask that this letter and my letter to Sir Samuel Hoare already referred to should be published at the earliest possible moment. On my part, I have scrupulously observed the rule of the jail, and have communicated my desire or the contents of the two letters to no one save my two companions, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Sjt. Mahadev Desai. But I want you to make it possible for public opinion to be affected by my letters. Hence, my request for their early publication.

### *No Other Course Open*

I regret the decision I have taken. But as a man of religion that I hold myself to be, I have no other course left open to me. As I have said in my letter to Sir Samuel

Hoare, even if His Majesty's Government decide to release me in order to save themselves from embarrassment, my fast will have to continue. For I cannot now hope to resist the decision by any other means. And I have no desire whatsoever to compass my release by any means other than honourable.

It may be that my judgment is warped, and that I am wholly in error regarding separate electorates for the Depressed Classes being harmful for them or Hinduism. If so, I am not likely to be in the right with reference to other parts of my philosophy of life. In that case, my death by fasting will be at once a penance for my error and a lifting of a weight from off those numberless men and women who have a child-like faith in my wisdom. Whereas if my judgment is right, as I have little doubt it is, the contemplated step is but a due fulfillment of a scheme of life which I have tried for more than a quarter of a century, apparently not without considerable success.

I remain, Your etc.

(Sd) M. K. GANDHI

( 4 )

*Letter from Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, 10 Downing Street, London, September 8 1932.*

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

I have received your letter with much surprise, and let me add with very sincere regret. Moreover, I cannot help thinking you have written it under a misunderstanding as to what the decision of His Majesty's Government as

regards the Depressed Classes really implies. We have always understood you were irrevocably opposed to permanent segregation of the Depressed Classes from the Hindu community. You made your position very clear on the Minorities Committee of the R. T. C. and you expressed it again in the letter you wrote to Sir Samuel Hoare on March 11. We also knew your view was shared by a great body of Hindu opinion, and we, therefore, took it into most careful account when we were considering the question of representation of the Depressed Classes.

Whilst in view of the numerous appeals we have received from the Depressed Class organisations and generally admitted social disabilities under which they labour and which you have often recognised we felt it our duty to safeguard what we believed to be the right of the Depressed Classes to a fair proportion of representation in the legislatures. We were equally careful to do nothing that would split off their community from the Hindu world.

You yourself stated in your letter of March 11 that you were not against their representation in the legislatures. Under the Government scheme, the Depressed Classes will remain a part of the Hindu community and will vote with the Hindu electorate on an equal footing; but for the first twenty years, while still remaining electorally a part of the Hindu community, they will receive, through a limited number of special constituencies, means of safeguarding their rights and interests that we are convinced is necessary under the present conditions. Where these constituencies are created, the members of the

Depressed Classes will not be deprived of their votes in general Hindu constituencies, but we will have two votes, in order that their membership of the Hindu community should remain unimpaired.

### *Safeguard Necessary*

We deliberately decided against the creation of what you describe as a communal electorate for the Depressed Classes, and included all the Depressed Class voters in general or Hindu constituencies, so that the higher caste candidates should have to solicit their votes or the Depressed Classes candidates should have to solicit the votes of the higher caste at elections. Thus in every way was the unity of the Hindu society to be preserved. However, we felt that during the early period of responsible government when the power the provinces would pass to whoever possessed a majority in the legislatures, it was essential that the Depressed Classes, whom you have yourself described in your letter to Sir Samuel Hoare as having been consigned by the caste Hindus to a calculated degradation for centuries, should return a certain number of members of their own choosing to the legislatures of seven of the nine provinces to voice their grievances and their ideals and prevent the decisions from going against them without the legislature and the Government listening to their case, in a word, to place them in a position to speak for themselves, which every fairminded person must agree to be necessary. We did not consider that the method of electing special representatives by reservation of seats in joint electorates would secure to the Depressed Classes in the existing

conditions under any system of franchise, which is practicable, members who could genuinely represent them and be responsible to them, because in practically all cases such members would be elected by a majority consisting of higher caste Hindus.

### *Different Effect*

The special advantages initially given under our scheme to the Depressed Classes by means of a limited number of special constituencies, in addition to their normal electoral rights in general Hindu constituencies, is wholly different in conception and effect from the method of representation adopted for a minority such as Moslems by means of separate communal electorates. For example, a Moslem cannot vote or be a candidate in a general constituency, whereas any electorally qualified member of the Depressed Classes can vote in and stand for general constituency.

The number of territorial seats allotted to Moslems is naturally conditioned by the fact that it is impossible for them to gain any further territorial seats, and in most provinces they enjoy a weightage in excess of their population ratio, the number to be filled from special Depressed Class constituencies will be seen to be small and has been fixed not to provide a quota numerically appropriate for the total representation of the whole of the Depressed Class population, but solely to secure a minimum number of spokesmen for the Depressed Classes in the legislature, who are chosen exclusively by the Depressed Classes. The proportion of their special seats is everywhere

much below the population percentage of the Depressed Classes.

As I understand your attitude, you propose to adopt the extreme course of starving yourself to death, not in order to secure that the Depressed Classes should have joint electorates along with other Hindus, because that is already provided, not to maintain the unity of the Hindus which is also provided, but solely to prevent the Depressed Classes, who admittedly suffer from terrible disabilities today from being able to secure a limited number of representatives of own choosing to speak on their behalf in the legislatures, which will have a dominating influence over their future. In the light of these very fair and cautious proposals, I am quite unable to understand the reason of the decision you have taken, and can only think that you have made it under a misapprehension of the actual facts.

### *No Change*

In response to the very general request from Indians after they had failed to produce a settlement themselves, the Government much against its will, undertook to give a decision on the Minorities question. They have now given it, and they cannot be expected to alter it, except on the condition they have stated. I am afraid, therefore, that my answer to you must be that the Government's decision stands, and that only an agreement of the communities themselves can substitute other electoral arrangement for those that the Government have devised in a sincere endeavour to weigh the conflicting claims of their just merits.



You ask this correspondence including your letter to Sir Samnel Hoare of March 11 should be published. As it would seem to me unfair if your present internment were to deprive you of the opportunity of explaining to the public the reason why you intend to fast, I readily accede to your request, if on reconsideration, you repeat it. Let me, however, once again urge upon you to consider the actual details of the Government's decision and ask yourself seriously the question whether it really justifies you in taking the action you contemplate.

I am,

Yours Very Truly.

(Sd) J. Ramsy MacDonald

( 5 )

*Letter from Mr. M. K. Gandhi, Yerrada Jail dated, September 9, 1932, to the Rt. Hon'ble J. Ramsay MacDonald, London.*

Dear friend,

I have to thank you for your frank and full letter telegraphed and received this day. I am sorry, however, that you put upon the contemplated action an interpretation that never crossed my mind. I have claimed to speak on behalf of the very class to the sacrifice of whose interests you impute to me a desire to fast myself to death. I had hoped that this extreme step itself would effectively prevent any such selfish interpretation.

Without urging, I affirm that for me this matter is one of pure religion. The mere fact of the Depressed Classes having double votes does not protect them or the

Hindu society in general from being disrupted. [In establishment of the separate electorates at all for the Depressed Classes, I sense an injection of poison that is calculated to destroy Hinduism and do no good whatever to the Depressed Classes. You will please permit me to say that no matter how sympathetic you may be, you cannot come to the correct decision on a matter of such vital and religious importance to the parties concerned.

I should not be against even over representation of the "Depressed" Classes, what I am against is their statutory separation, even in a limited form, from the Hindu fold, so long as they choose to belong to it. Do you realise that if your decision stands and the constitution comes into being you arrest the marvellous growth of the Hindu reformers, who have dedicated themselves to the uplift of their suppressed brethren in every walk of life.

I have, therefore, been compelled reluctantly to adhere to the decision conveyed to you.

As your letter may give rise to a misunderstanding, I wish to state that the fact of my having isolated for special treatment the Depressed Classes question from the other parts of your decision, does not in any way mean that I approve of or am reconciled to other parts of the decision. In my opinion, many other parts are open to very grave objections. Only I do not consider them to be any warrant for calling from me such self-immolation as my conscience has prompted me to in the matter of the Depressed Classes.

I remain, Your faithful friend,

(Sd) M. K. GANDHI

## APPENDIX D

# ESSENCE OF THE FAST

## Gandhiji's Letter to Bombay Govt.

*The following is the statement that Mahatma Gandhi sent to the Bombay Government on the 15th. Sept. 1932, on his decision to fast in connection with Depressed Classes problem.*

The fast which I am approaching was resolved upon in the name of God for His work and, as I believe in all humility, at His call. Friends have urged me to postpone the date for the sake of giving the public a chance to organise itself. I regret to say that it is not in my power to postpone it, what to say of days, even for an hour, except for the reason stated in my letter to the Prime Minister. The impending fast is against those who have faith in me, whether Indians or foreigners, and for those who have it not. Therefore, it is not against the English official world but it is against those Englishmen and women, who, in spite of the contrary teaching of the official world, believe in me and in the justice of the cause I represent. Nor is it against those of my countrymen who have no faith in me, whether they be Hindus or others, but it is against those countless Indians (no matter to what persuasion they belong) who believe that I represent a just cause.

### *No Emotional Appeal*

Above all, it is intended to sting Hindu conscience into right religious action. The contemplated fast is no appeal to mere emotion. By fast I want to throw the whole of my weight (such as it is) in the scales of justice, pure and simple. Therefore, there need be no undue haste in the feverish anxiety to save my life.

I implicitly believe in the truth of the saying that not a blade of grass moves but by His will. He will save it if He needs it for further service in this body. None can save it against His will. Humanly speaking, I believe it will stand the strain for some time.

### *The Last Straw*

Separate electorate is merely the last straw. No patched up agreement between caste Hindu leaders and rival Depressed Class leaders will answer the purpose. Agreement to be valid has to be real. If the Hindu mass mind is not yet prepared to banish untouchability, root and branch, it must sacrifice me without the slightest hesitation.

There should be no coercion of those who are opposed to joint electorates. I have no difficulty in understanding their bitter opposition. They have every right to distrust me. Do I not belong to that Hindu section, miscalled superior class or caste Hindus, who have ground down to powder the so-called untouchables? Marvel is that the latter have remained, nevertheless, in the Hindu fold.

### *A Standing Reproach*

BUT whilst I can justify this opposition, I believe that they are in error. They will, if they can separate Depressed Classes entirely from Hindu society and form them into a separate class, be a standing and living reproach to Hinduism. I should not mind if thereby their interest could be really served. But my intimate acquaintance with every shade of untouchability convinces me that their lives, such as they are, are so intimately mixed with those of caste Hindus in whose midst and for whom they live that it is impossible to separate them. They are a part of an individual family.

Their revolt against the Hindus with whom they live and their apostacy from Hinduism I should understand. But this so far as I can see, they will not do. There is a subtle something—quite indefinable—in Hinduism which keeps them in it, even in spite of themselves. And this fact makes it imperative for a man like me with living experience of it, to resist the contemplated separation even though the effort should cost life itself. Implications of this resistance are tremendous. No compromise which does not ensure fullest freedom for the Depressed Classes inside the Hindu fold can be an adequate substitute for the contemplated separation. Any betrayal of trust can merely postpone the day of immolation for me and henceforth for those who think with me. The problem before responsible Hindus is to consider whether in the event of social, civil or political persecution of the "Depressed" Classes, they are prepared to face *Satyagraha* in the shape of perpetual fast, not of one reformer like me but an increasing army

of reformers who, I believe, do exist to-day in India and who will count their lives of no cost to achieve the liberation of these classes and there through Hinduism of age-long superstition. Let the fellow reformers who have worked with me also appreciate the implications of the fast. It is either a hallucination of mine or an illumination. If it is the former, I must be allowed to do my penance in peace. It will be lifting of a dead-weight on Hinduism. If it is illumination, may my agony purify Hinduism and even melt hearts of those who are at present disposed to distrust me.

Since there appears to be a misunderstanding as to the application of my fast, I may repeat that it is aimed at statutory separate electorate, in any shape or form for the Depressed Classes. Immediately that threat is removed once for all, my fast will end.

### *Reservation of Seats*

I hold strong views about reservation of seats as also about the most proper method of dealing with the whole question. But I consider myself unfit as a prisoner to set forth my proposals. I should, however, abide by any agreement on the basis of decision on other parts of the communal question. I am personally opposed to many other parts of it which, to my mind, make the working of any free democratic constitution well-nigh impossible, nor would a satisfactory solution of this question in any way bind me to accept the constitution that may be framed. These are political questions for the National Congress to consider and determine. They are utterly outside my

## The Bleeding Wound

province in my individual capacity. Nor may I as prisoner air my individual views on these questions. My fast has a narrow application.

The Depressed Classes question, being predominantly a religious matter, I regard as specially my own by reason of lifelong concentration on it. It is a sacred personal trust which I may not shirk. Fasting for light and penance is a hoary institution. I have observed it in Christianity and in Islam. Hindnism is replete with instances of fasting for purification and penance. But it is a privilege and it is also a duty. Moreover to the best of my light I have reduced it to a science. As an expert, therefore, I would warn friends and sympathisers against copying me blindly out of false or hysterical sympathy. Let all such qualify themselves by hard work and selfless service of the untouchables and they would have an independent light when their time for fasting came. Lastly in so far as I know this fast is being undertaken with the purest of motives and without malice or anger against any single soul. For me it is an expression of and last deal on non-violence. Those, therefore, who would use violence in this controversy against those whom they may consider to be inimical to me or the cause I represent will simply hasten my end. Perfect courtesy and consideration towards the opponents is an absolute essential of success in this cause, at least, if not in all causes.

(Sd.) M. K. GANDHI.

## APPENDIX E

# 'UNTOUCHABLE BY CHOICE'

## How The Fast Began

In the course of an interview to Pressmen in the evening of 20th Sept. at Yeravada lasting one hour, Mahatmaji said he commenced fast at 12 noon to-day after reciting a beautiful hymn composed by a daughter of Abbas Tyabji. Explaining the purport of the hymn, Gandhiji said it meant "O Traveller, get up and leave your bed, because it is daybreak. Night is gone; why is it that you are still sleeping? He who is asleep when he has got to be awake, has every cause to shed tears, or will have to shed tears, and he who is wideawake has his heart's wish fulfilled."

Applying this to himself Gandhiji said: "When it was day-break, God did not find me wanting, and I have embarked upon fast, so I hope to have no cause for shedding tears, because I did not allow darkness to steal over me. That would be my food throughout this weary journey."

### *Sympathetic Fast*

"In this connection I would urge everybody not to fast in sympathy with me. It would be wrong to do so. This was undertaken by me, as I firmly believe, in God's call. Therefore, unless there is a similar definite call for the person who fasts, he has no business to fast. To fast for one day for the sake of purification or demonstration of one's identification with the cause is any day a good thing and perfectly defensible. But if they do it till His Majesty's Government's decision is revoked, they would be setting a bad example, and would be no good either to him, or anybody else. Such a fast is both a privilege and a duty, and a privilege accrues only to those who have had previous discipline fitting them for such an undertaking."



## *Reservation*

Questioned about the intention of the fast and Dr. Ambedkar's contention that Gandhiji had not laid his cards on the table, he said--"My cards have always been on the table, and so far as the present situation is concerned, I could say nothing from behind prison bars. Now that I have got the opportunity only a few hours ago, I have answered the very first call from the press, and had the statement I sent to the Government on September 15 been immediately issued to the Press, that would have explained my position. Briefly put, it is this:

"My fast is only against separate electorates, and not against statutory reservation of seats. To say that I damaged the cause by my uncompromising opposition to reservation of seats for the Suppressed Classes is only partly true. Opposed I certainly was to reservation as I am even now. But there never was put before me a scheme of statutory reservation for acceptance or rejection. There was no question of my having to decide on that.

## *Road to Uplift*

"When I developed my own idea about statutory reservation, I certainly expressed my emphatic opposition as, in my humble opinion, statutory reservation, instead of doing service to the Suppressed classes, will only do harm in the sense that it will stop their natural evolution. Statutory reservation is like a support. When a man relies on a support, to that extent he weakens himself.

"If people would not laugh at me, I would gently put in a claim which I have always asserted, namely, *that I am a touchable by birth but an untouchable by choice*. I have always endeavoured in my own fashion to qualify myself to represent the lowest amongst the Suppressed Classes. Be it said to our shame that there are castes and classes even among suppressed classes.

## *His Ambition*

"My ambition has always been to represent them and identify myself as far as possible with the lowest strata amongst the untouchables, namely, the invisibles and unapproachables, whom I have always before my mind's eyes wherever I go, for I have drunk of this poison cup. I met them in Malabar, and some more in Orissa, and I am convinced that if they are to rise, it will not be by reservation of seats; it will be by strenuous work done by Hindu reformers in their midst, and it is because I felt separation will kill all prospects of reforms that my whole being rebelled against it.

## *Beginning of End*

"It is because I feel that this separation would kill all prospects of reform that my whole soul rebelled against it. Let me make it plain that the withdrawal of separate electorates will satisfy the letter of my vow; it will never satisfy the spirit behind it, and in my capacity of self-chosen untouchable, I am not going to rest content with a patched up pact between the touchables and the untouchables.

"What I want, what I am living for, what I should delight in dying for is the eradication of untouchability, root and branch. I want, therefore, a living pact whose life-giving effects should be felt not in the distant to-morrow but to-day and therefore that pact should be sealed by an all India demonstration of touchables and untouchables meeting together, not by way of a theatrical show, but in real brotherly embrace and it is in order to achieve this dream of my life for the past 50 years that I have entered into this fiery gate.

"The British Government's decision was the last straw. The decisive symptom, therefore, with the unerring eye of the physician that I claim to be in such matters, I detected the symptom and, therefore, for me the abolition of separate electorates would be but the beginning of the end.

## *Life of no Consequence*

"I would warn all those leaders, at Bombay and others against coming to any hasty decision. My life I count of no consequence. Hundred such lives given for this noble cause would, in my opinion, be a poor penance done by Hindus for the atrocious wrongs heaped on helpless men and women of their own race. The human family would come to my assistance.

"I have embarked upon this thing with a heart, so far as it is possible for a human being to achieve, free of impurity, free of all malice and of all anger. You will, therefore, see that this fast is based on faith, first of all in the cause, faith in Hindu humanity, faith in human nature and faith even in the official world."

## *Religious Aspect*

When Gandhiji's attention was drawn to the Daily Herald's criticism that he is fasting for a minor detail of the constitution, Gandhiji said, "This has no connection with politics in any shape or form. It does not mean, therefore, that it has no political result. It will certainly produce great political result. But the fundamental thing is the religious and moral aspect of it and I take religion here in the broadest sense of the term, because in attacking 'untouchability', I believe, I have gone to the very root of the matter.

"Therefore, it is an issue of transcendental value far surpassing Swaraj in terms of a political constitution and I would say that such a constitution would be a dead weight if it was not backed by a moral basis in the shape of the present hope engendered in the breast of the down-trodden millions that this dead weight was going to be lifted from off their shoulders.

It is only because English officials cannot possibly see the living side of this picture that, in their ignorance, they sit as judges on questions that affect the fundamental being of millions of people, and here I mean both caste Hindus and untouchables, and that is the suppressed and suppressors. And it was in order to wake up officialdom from its gross ignorance, if I may make use of this

expression without being guilty of giving offence, I felt impelled by the voice within to offer resistance with the whole of my being".

Gandhiji further stated that he was anxious to live. "You can depend upon me to make a supreme effort to hold myself together so that the Hindu conscience may be quickened, as also the British conscience, and this agony may end."

"I would, therefore, urge them not to swerve an inch from the path of strictest justice. My fast I want to throw on the scales of justice and if it wakes up caste Hindus from their slumber, and if they are aroused to their sense of duty, it will have served its purpose whereas, if out of blind affection for me, they would somehow or other come to a rough and ready agreement so as to secure abrogation of separate electorates and then go off to sleep, they would be committing a grievous blunder. They would have made my life a misery, for while abrogation of separate electorates would result in breaking my fast, I would be a living waste. If the vital fact for which I am starving is not arrived at, it would simply mean that as soon as I call off the fast, I would have to give notice of another fast in order to achieve the spirit of the vow to the fullest extent.

### *Removing the Curse*

"It may look childish to the onlooker, not so to me. If I had anything more to give, I would throw that also in for removing this curse. But I had nothing more than my life. I believe that if untouchability is really rooted out of Hinduism it will not only purge Hinduism of a terrible blot, but its repercussion would be world-wide.

"My fight against untouchability is a fight against the impure inhumanity and therefore, when I penned my letter to Sir Samuel, I did so in the full faith that the very best in human nature would come to my aid".

### *Agony of Soul*

Questioned as to what he meant by "agony" in the previous sentence, he said: "Agony" is not merely of bodily hunger by

starvation, but also of a spiritual nature. The heart would be constantly rising in prayer to the Almighty God that this terrible curse of untouchability may end and this is what I meant by agony.

"My personal experience is that hunger craving would cease after two or three days. So it would be foolish to shed tears thinking that I would be suffering these pangs. I have disciplined myself sufficiently, and I am not new at fasts."



# APPENDIX F.

## Various Schemes of Representation for Dipressed Classes

*A Comparative table showing the strength of Depressed Classes representation in Provincial Councils, set forth in various schemes.*

Provinces	Total strength of Members	Indian C. Committee	Simon Commis- sion	Minorities Pact of R. T. C.	Communal Award	Raja-Moonje Pact	Poona Pact
Madras	215	20	24	43	18	32	30
Bombay-Sindh	200	14	12	28	10	16	15
Bengal	250	10	45	44	10	61	30
U. P.	228	12	43	45	12	57	20
Punjab	125	7	13	17	0	23	8
Bihar-Orrissa	175	7	18	24	7	24	18
C. P.	112	7	11	22	10	26	20
Assam	108	13	11	14	4	14	7
Total	1413	90	177	237	71	253	148

APPENDIX G

# POONA PACT

( 1 )

## Text of Agreement

*The following is the text of the agreement arrived at between the leaders acting on behalf respectively of the Depressed Classes and the rest of the Hindu community regarding the representation of the Depressed Classes in the Legislatures and certain other matters affecting their welfare :*

( 1 ) There shall be seats reserved for the Depressed Classes out of the general electorate seats in the Provincial Legislatures as follows :

Madras, 30; Bombay, ( with Sind ) 15; Punjab, 8; Bihar and Orissa, 18; Central Provinces, 20; Assam, 7; Bengal, 30; United Provinces, 20; total 148;

These figures are based on the total strength of the Provincial Councils announced in the Prime Minister's decision.

( 2 ) Election to these seats shall be by joint electorate subject, however, to the following procedure: All members of the Depressed Classes, registered in the General electoral roll of the constituency, will form an electoral college which will elect a panel of four candidates belonging to the Depressed Classes for each of such reserved seats by the method of a single vote, and the four persons, getting the highest number of votes on such primary election, shall be candidates for election by the general electorate.

(3) Representation of the Depressed Classes in the Central Legislature shall likewise be on the principle of joint electorates and reserved seats by the method of primary election in the manner provided for in clause 2 above for their representation in the Provincial Legislatures.

(4) In the Central Legislature, 18 per cent. of the seats, allotted to the general electorate for British India in the said legislature, shall be reserved for the Depressed Classes.

(5) The system of primary election, the panel of candidates for election to the Central and Provincial Legislatures, as herein before mentioned, shall come to an end after the first ten years, unless terminated sooner by mutual agreement under provision of clause 6 below.

(6) The system of representation of the Depressed Classes by reserved seats in the Provincial and Central Legislatures, as provided for in clauses 1 and 4, shall continue until determined by mutual agreement between the communities concerned in this settlement.

(7) The franchise for the Central and Provincial Legislatures for the Depressed Classes shall be as indicated in the Lothian Committee report.

(8) There shall be no disabilities attaching to anyone on the ground of his being a member of the Depressed Classes in regard to any elections to local bodies or appointment to public services and every endeavour shall be made to secure the fair representation of the Depressed Classes in these respects, subject to such educational qualifications as may be laid down for appointment to the public services.



## The Bleeding Wound

(9) In every province, of the educational grant, an adequate sum shall be earmarked for providing educational facilities to members of the Depressed Classes.

( Signed by )

M. M. Malaviya	Ambedkar
T. B. Saprú	Jayakar
C. Rajagopalachar	Rajendra Prasad
C. V. Mehta	M. C. Rajah
G. D. Birla	Gavai
Devadhar	Rajbhoj
Kamolkar	A. V. Thakkar

P. Baloo and other delegates.

( 2 )

### Text of Announcement

*Following is the full text of Home Secretary Mr. Haig's announcement in the Legislative Assembly on 26th Sept. 1932.*

"His Majesty's Government have learnt with great satisfaction that an agreement has been reached between the leaders of the Depressed Classes and of the rest of the Hindu community regarding the representation of the Depressed Classes in the new legislatures and certain other matters affecting their welfare. In place of the system of general constituencies combined with special Depressed Class constituencies contained in the Government's Communal Award of August 4, last the agreement provides for general constituencies within which seats are reserved for the Depressed Classes subject to important conditions as to the manner in which the reserved seats are filled.

"The Government in the Award, which was given in the absence of agreement between the communities, were solely concerned, in relation to the Depressed Classes, to provide adequate securities that in the interests of those Classes should be observed by the new legislatures.

"As representatives of the Depressed Classes and the Hindus acting together, believe that the scheme now forwarded by them to His Majesty's Government is adequate for that purpose, the Government, in accordance with the procedure which they laid down in paragraph four of their Award, will recommend to Parliament in due course, the adoption of the clauses of the agreement dealing with representation in provincial legislatures in place of the provisions in paragraph nine of the Award.

### *Number of Reserved Seats*

"It will be understood that the total number of general seats including those reserved for the Depressed Classes under the agreement will in each province remain the same as the number of general seats plus the number of special Depressed Classes seats provided by His Majesty's Government's decision.

"His Majesty's Government note that the agreement deals also certain questions outside the scope of their Award of August 4. Clauses eight and nine deal with general points the realisation of which will likely depend in the main on the actual working of the constitution. But His Majesty's Government take note of these clauses as a definite pledge of the intentions of the caste Hindus towards the Depressed Classes.

*Two Points*

"There are two other points outside the scope of the Award.

(1) The agreement contemplates that the franchise for the Depressed Classes should be that recommended by the Franchise Committee ( Lord Lothian's Committee ).

"It is obvious that the level of the franchise for the Depressed Classes ( and indeed, for Hindus generally ) must be determined at the same time as that for other communities is being settled and the whole subject is under the consideration of His Majesty's Government.

(2) The agreement also provides for a particular method of electing Depressed Class representatives for the legislature at the centre. This again is a subject outside the terms of this Award which is under investigation, as part of the whole scheme, for election for the legislature at the centre and no piecemeal conclusion can be reached. What has been said on these two points should not be regarded as implying that His Majesty's Government are against what is proposed in the agreement but that these questions are still under consideration.

To prevent misunderstanding it may be explained that the Government regards the figure eighteen per cent. for the percentage of British India general seats at the centre to be reserved for Depressed Classes as a matter for settlement between these and other Hindus.

## APPENDIX H.

# HOW THE FAST WAS BROKEN

( 1 )

In the presence of Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore and a huge congregation of friends and relations Mahatmaji broke his fast at five o'clock in the evening of 26th. Sept.

After prayer Gandhiji took sweet lime juice. The Inspector-General of Prisons communicated to Gandhiji a document from the Bombay Government containing acceptance by the Premier of the Poona Pact at 4 o'clock in the evening. Though this was at 4 p.m. it was only at 5 p.m. that Gandhiji broke his fast.

Mrs. Kamla Nehru crushed two sweet limes into a glass and Mrs. Gandhi handed it over to Mahatmaji, who sitting on the cot slowly sipped it with an unsteady hand, supported by Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel and Mr. Mahadeva Desai. The fast which was entered on with only two intimate associates was broken at what amounted to a family reunion surrounded by about a hundred relatives and friends.

( 2 )

## **Mahatmaji's Statement**

*The following statement was issued by Mahatmaji at the conclusion of the Fast:*

"The fast taken in the name of God was broken in the presence of Gurudeva and a leper prisoner and Parachure Shastri, a learned pandit, seated opposite each other.

and in the company of loving and loved ones who had gathered round me. The Breaking of the fast was preceded by the Poet singing one of his Bengali hymns, then mantras from the Upanishads by Parachure Shastri and then my favourite hymn *Vaishnava jana*.

*"The hand of God has been risible in the glorious manifestation throughout the length and breadth of India during the past seven days."*

"Cables received from many parts of the world blessing the fast have sustained me through the agony of body and soul that I passed through during the seven days, but the cause was worth going through that agony and the sacrificial fire once lit shall not be put out till there is the slightest trace of untouchability still left in Hinduism. And if it is God's will that it does not end with my life I have confidence that there are several thousand earnest reformers who will lay down their lives in order to purify Hinduism of this awful curse.

### *A Generous Gesture*

"The settlement arrived at is, so far as I can see, a generous gesture on all sides. It is the meeting of hearts, and my gratitude is due to Dr. Ambedkar and Rao Bahadur Srinivasan and his party, on the one hand, and Rao Bahadur Rajah, on the other. They could have taken up an uncompromising and defiant attitude by way of punishment to the so-called caste Hindus for the sins of generations. If they had done so, I at-least could not have resented their attitude, and my death would have been but a trifling price exacted for the tortures that the outcasts of Hinduism have been going through for unknown

generations. But they chose a nobler path, and have thus shown that they followed the precept of forgiveness, enjoined by all religions.

*"Let me hope that the caste Hindus will prove themselves worthy of the forgiveness and carry out to the letter and spirit every clause of the settlement with all its implications."*

### *Beginning of the End*

"The settlement is but the beginning of the end. The political part of it is very important, though it, no doubt, occupies but a small space in the vast field of reform that has to be tackled by the caste Hindus during the coming days, namely, complete removal of social and religious disabilities, under which a large part of the Hindu population has been groaning.

*"I should be guilty of a breach of trust if I do not warn the fellow reformers and the caste Hindus in general that the breaking of the fast carries with it a sure promise of resumption if this reform is not relentlessly pursued and achieved within a measureable period. I had thought of laying down a period, but I feel that I may not do so without a direct call from within."*

"The message of freedom shall penetrate every untouchable home and that can only happen if the reformers will cover every village and yet in the wave of enthusiasm and in an inordinate desire to spare me of the repetition of agony there should be no coercion. We must by patient toil and self-suffering convert the ignorant and the superstitious—and never seek to compel them by force.

"I wish, too, that an almost ideal solution that has been arrived at may be followed by other communities, and that we might see the dawn of a new era of mutual

give and take and the recognition of fundamental unity of all communities.

"I would here single out the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh question. I am the same to Mussalman to-day that I was in 1920-22. I should be just prepared to lay down my life, as I was in Delhi, to achieve an organic unity and permanent peace between them, and I hope and pray that there will be, as a result of this upheaval, spontaneous move in this direction and then surely the other communities can no longer stand out.

### *Government Thanked*

"I would like to thank the Government, and the jail staff and medical men appointed by the Government to look after me. Extreme care and attention was bestowed upon me—nothing was left undone. The jail staff worked under terrible pressure, and I observed that they did not grudge this labour. I thank them all from high to low. I thank the British Cabinet for hastening the decision on the settlement. The terms of decision sent to me I havenot approached without misgiving. It accepts, I suppose very naturally, only that part of the agreement that refers to the British Cabinet's communal decision.

*"I expect that they had constitutional difficulty in now announcing their acceptance of the whole agreement, but I would like to assure my Harijan friends, as I would like henceforth to name them, that so far as I am concerned, I am wedded to the whole of that agreement and they hold my life as a hostage for its due fulfilment unless we ourselves arrive at any other and better settlement of our own free will."*

## APPENDIX I

# WAR ON UNTOUCHABILITY.

## Mahatma Gandhi's Recent Statements.

( 1

For reasons over which I had no control I have not been able to deal with the question of untouchability, as I had fully intended to, after the breaking of the fast. The Government having now granted me permission to carry on public propaganda in connection with the work, I am able to deal with the numerous correspondents who have been writing to me either in criticism of the Yeravda Pact, or to seek guidance, or to know my views about the different questions that arise in the course of the campaign against untouchability. In this preliminary statement I propose to confine myself to the salient questions only, deferring for the time being other questions which do not call for immediate disposal.

I take up first the question of the possibility of my resuming the fast. Some correspondents contend that the fast savours of coercion and should not have been undertaken at all and that therefore it should never be resumed. Some others have argued that there is no warrant in Hindu religion, or any religion for that matter, for a fast like mine. I do not propose to deal with the religious aspect. Suffice it to say that it was at God's call that I embarked upon the last fast and it would be at His call



that it would be resumed, if it ever is. But when it was first undertaken, it was undoubtedly for removal of untouchability, root and branch. That it took the form it did was no choice of mine. The Cabinet decision precipitated the crisis of my life, but I knew that the revocation of the British Cabinet's decision was to be but the beginning of the end. A tremendous force could not be set in motion merely in order to alter a political decision unless it had behind it a much deeper meaning, even unknown to its authors. The people affected instinctively recognised that meaning and responded.

### *The Impending fast*

Perhaps no man within living memory has travelled so often from one end of India to the other or has penetrated so many villages and come in contact with so many millions as I have. They have all known my life. They have known that I have recognised no barriers between "untouchables" and "touchables" or caste and caste. They have heard me speak often in their own tongues denouncing untouchability in unmeasured terms describing it as a curse and a blot upon Hinduism! With rare exceptions, at hundreds of these mass meetings or at private meetings in all parts of India, there has been no protest against my presentation of the case against untouchability. Crowds have passed resolutions denouncing untouchability and pledging themselves to remove it from their midst and they have on innumerable occasions called God as witness to their pledge and asked for His blessing that He may give them strength to carry out their

pledge. It was against these millions that my fast was undertaken and it was their spontaneous love that brought about a transformation inside of five days and brought into being the Yeravda Pact. And it will be against them that the fast will be resumed if that Pact is not carried out by them in its fullness. The Government are now practically out of it. Their part of the obligation they fulfilled promptly. The major part of the resolutions of the Yeravda Pact has to be fulfilled by these millions, the so-called caste-Hindus who have flocked to the meetings I have described. It is they who have to embrace the suppressed brethren and sisters as their very own, whom they have to invite to their temples, to their homes, to their schools. The untouchables in the villages should be made to feel that their shackles have been broken, that they are in no way inferior to their fellow-villagers, that they are worshippers of the same God as other villagers and are entitled to the same rights and privileges that the latter enjoy. But if these vital conditions of the Pact are not carried out by caste-Hindus, could I possibly live to face God and man? I ventured even to tell Dr. Ambedkar, Rao Bahadur Raja and other friends belonging to the suppressed group that they should regard me as a hostage for the due fulfillment by caste-Hindus of the conditions of the Pact. The fast, if it has to come, will not be for the coercion of those who are opponents of the reform, but it will be intended to sting into action those who have been my comrades or who have taken pledges for the removal of untouchability. If they belie their pledges or if they never meant to abide by them and their

## The Bleeding Wound

Hinduism was a mere camouflage, I should have no interest left in life. My fast therefore ought not to affect the opponents of reform, nor even fellow-workers and the millions who have led me to believe that they were with me and the Congress in the campaign against untouchability, if the latter have on second thoughts come to the conclusion that untouchability is not after all a crime against God and humanity. In my opinion, fasting for purification of self and others is an age-long institution and it will subsist so long as man believes in God. It is the prayer to the Almighty from an anguished heart. But whether my argument is wise or foolish, I cannot be dislodged from my position so long as I do not see the folly or the error of it. It will be resumed only in obedience to the inner voice, and only if there is a manifest breakdown of the Yeravda Pact, owing to the criminal neglect of caste-Hindus to implement its conditions. Such neglect would mean a betrayal of Hinduism. I should not care to remain its living witness.

There is another fast which is a near possibility and that is in connection with opening of the Guruvayyur Temple in Kerala. It was at my urgent request that Sjt. Kelappan suspended his fast for three months, a fast that had well-nigh brought him to death's door. I would be in honour bound to fast with him if on or before the first of January next that temple is not opened to the untouchables precisely on the same terms as the touchables and if it becomes necessary for Sjt. Kelappan to resume his fast. I have been obliged to dwell at some length upon these possible fasts because of the receipt of hot correspondence

from two or three quarters. Co-workers, however, should not be agitated over the possibility. To become unnerved over a prospect one would not like to face, very often results in its materialising. The best way of averting it is for all affected by it to put forth their whole strength into the work that would render the occurrence impossible.

### *Interdining and Inter-Marriage*

Correspondents have asked whether interdining and inter-marriage are part of the movement against untouchability. In my opinion they are not. They touch the caste-men equally with the outcastes. It is therefore not obligatory on an anti-untouchability worker to devote himself or herself to interdining and intermarriage reform. Personally, I am of opinion that this reform is coming sooner than we expect. Restriction on intercaste dining and intercaste marriage is no part of Hindu religion. It is a social custom which crept into Hinduism when perhaps it was in its decline, and was then meant perhaps to be a temporary protection against disintegration of Hindu society. To-day these two prohibitions are weakening Hindu society and emphasis on them has turned the attention of mass mind from the fundamentals which are vital to life's growth. Wherever therefore people voluntarily take part in functions where touchables and untouchables, Hindus and non-Hindus are invited to join dinner parties, I welcome them as a healthy sign. But I should never dream of making this reform, however desirable in itself it may be, part of an all-India reform which has been long overdue. Untouchability in the form we all know it

is a canker eating into the very vitals of Hinduism. Dining and marriage restrictions stunt Hindu society. I think the distinction is fundamental. It would be unwise in a hurricane campaign to overweight and thus endanger the main issue. It may even amount to a breach of faith with the masses to call upon them suddenly to view the removal of untouchability in a light different from what they have been taught to believe it to be. On the one hand, therefore, whilst interdining may go on where the public is itself ready for it, it should not be part of the India-wide campaign.

### *The Spirit of Sanatana Dharma*

I have letters, some of them angrily worded, from those who style themselves *Sanatanists*. For them untouchability is the essence of Hinduism. Some of them regard me as a renegade. Some others consider that I have imbibed notions against untouchability and the like from Christianity and Islam. Some again quote scriptures in defence of untouchability. To these I have promised a reply through this statement. I would venture, therefore, to tell these correspondents that I claim myself to be a *Sanatanist*. Their definition of a *Sanatanist* is obviously different from mine. For me *Sanatana-Dharma* is the vital faith handed down from generations belonging even to pre-historic period and based upon the Vedas and the writings that followed them. For me the Vedas are as indefinable as God and Hinduism. It would be only partially true to say that the Vedas are the four books which one finds in print. These books are

themselves remnants of the discourses left by the unknown seers. Those of later generations added to these original treasures according to their lights. There then arose a great and lofty-minded man, the composer of the Gita. He gave to the Hindu world a synthesis of Hindu Religion at once deeply philosophical and yet easily to be understood by any unsophisticated seeker. It is the one open book to every Hindu who will care to study it and if all the other scriptures were reduced to ashes, the seven hundred verses of this imperishable booklet are quite enough to tell one what Hinduism is and how one can live up to it. And I claim to be a *Sanatanist* because for forty years I have been seeking literally to live up to the teachings of that book. Whatever is contrary to its main theme I reject as un-Hindu. It excludes no faith and no teacher. It gives me great joy to be able to say that I have studied the Bible, the Koran, Zend Avesta and the other scriptures of the world with the same reverence that I have given to the Gita. This reverent reading has strengthened my faith in the Gita. They have broadened my outlook and therefore my Hinduism. Lives of Zoroaster, Jesus and Mohamad, as I have understood them, have illumined many a passage in the Gita. What therefore these Sanatani friends have hurled against me as a taunt has been to me a source of consolation. I take pride in calling myself a Hindu because I find the term broad enough not merely to tolerate but to assimilate the teachings of prophets from all the four corners of the earth. I find no warrant for untouchability in this Book of Life. On the contrary it compels me, by an appeal to my reason and a more penetra-

ting appeal to my heart in language that has a magnetic touch about it, to believe that all life is one and that it is through God and must return to him. According to *Sanatana Dharma* taught by that venerable Mother, life does not consist in outward rites and ceremonial, but it consists in the uttermost inward purification and merging oneself, body, soul and mind, in the divine essence. I have gone to masses in their millions with this message of the Gita burnt into my life. And they have instinctively recognised me as one of them, as one belonging to their faith. And as days have gone by, my belief has grown stronger and stronger that I could not be wrong in claiming to belong to *Sanatana Dharma* and if God wills it, He will let me seal that claim with my death.

November 4, 1932.

Yeravda Central Prison.

M. K. GANDHI.

( 2 )

A Correspondent, in spite of having received a liberal education, suggests that before *Harijans* are put on a level with caste-Hindus, they should become fit for such reception, shed their dirty habits, give up eating carrion; and another goes the length of saying that Bhangis and Chamars who are engaged in what he considers are "dirty occupations" should give them up. These critics forget that castemen are responsible for whatever bad habits are to be observed amongst the *Harijans*. The so-called higher castes have deprived them of facilities for keeping themselves clean and also the incentive for doing

so. As for the occupations of scavenging and tanning, they are no more dirty than many other occupations I can name. What may be admitted is that these occupations like several others are carried on in a dirty manner. That again is due to the high-handed indifference and criminal neglect of the "high castes." I can say from personal experience that both scavenging and tanning can be done in a perfectly healthy and clean manner. Every mother is a scavenger in regard to her own children and every student of modern medicine is a tanner inasmuch as he has to dissect and skin human carcasses. But we consider theirs to be sacred occupations. I submit that the ordinary scavenger's and the tanner's occupations are no less sacred and no less useful than those of mothers and medical men. We shall go wrong if castemen regard themselves as patrons distributing favours to the *Harijans*. Whatever is done now by the caste-Hindus for the *Harijans* will be but a tardy reparation for the wrongs done to them for generations, and if now they have to be received in their existing state, as they must be received, it is a well-deserved punishment for the past guilt. But there is this certain satisfaction that the very act of receiving them with open hearts would be a sufficient incentive to cleanliness and the castemen will for their own comfort and convenience provide *Harijans* with facilities for keeping themselves clean.

### *The Tragic Picture*

It is well to remind ourselves of what wrongs we have heaped upon the devoted heads of the *Harijans*.



Socially they are lepers. Economically they are worse than slaves. Religiously they are denied entrance to places we miscall "houses of God." They are denied the use, on the same terms as the castemen, of public roads, public schools, public hospitals, public wells, public taps, public parks and the like, and in some cases their approach within a measured distance is a social crime and in some other rare enough cases their very sight is an offence. They are relegated for their residence to the worst quarters of cities or villages where they practically get no social services. Caste Hindu lawyers, and doctors will not serve them as they do other members of society. Brahmins will not officiate at their religious functions. The wonder is that they are at all able to eke out an existence or that they still remain within the Hindu fold. They are too downtrodden to rise in revolt against their suppressors.

I have recalled these tragic and shameful facts in order to make the workers vividly realise the implication of the Yeravda Pact. It is only ceaseless effort that can raise these downtrodden fellow beings from degradation, purify Hinduism and raise the whole Hindu society and with it the whole of India.

Let us not be stunned by this simple recital of the wrongs. If the demonstration during the Fast week was a genuine expression of repentance on the part of caste-Hindus all will be well, and every *Harijan* will soon feel the glow of freedom. But before this much-desired end can be achieved the message of freedom will have to be carried to the remotest village. Indeed the work in the village is far more difficult than in the big cities where it is possible

quickly to mobilise public opinion. Now that there is the All-India Anti-Untouchability League workers should work in coordination with that League. And here I would like to recall what Dr. Ambedkar told me. He said, "Let there be no repetition of the old method when the reformer claimed to know more of the requirements of his victims than the victims themselves," and therefore, he added, "tell your workers to ascertain from the representatives of the *Harijans* what their first need is and how they would like it to be satisfied. Joint refreshments are good enough by way of demonstration, but they may be overdone. There is a flavour of patronage about them. I would not attend them myself. The more dignified procedure would be to invite us to ordinary social functions without any fuss. Even temple entry, good and necessary as it is, may wait. The crying need is the raising of the economic status and decent behaviour in the daily contact." I must not repeat here some of the harrowing details given by him from his own bitter experiences. I felt the force of his remarks. I hope every one of my readers will do likewise.

### *A few Suggestions*

Many suggestions have been sent to me for adoption by the reformers. One is a repetition of what Swami Shradhdhanandji used to repeat so often, namely, that every Hindu should have in his home a *Harijan* who would be for all practical purposes a member of the family. The second comes from a non-Hindu friend deeply interested in India's welfare. He says that every well-to-do Hindu should bear the expense of giving, if possible, under his own observation, higher education to a *Harijan* young man or

girl so that these after finishing their education might work for the uplift of fellow *Harijans*. Both the suggestions are worthy of consideration and adoption. I would ask all who have fruitful suggestions to make to pass them on to the newly established League. Correspondents should recognise my limitations. From behind the prison gates, I can only tender advice to the League and the people. I can take no part in the real execution of plans. They should also recognise that my opinions, based as they must be on insufficient data, and often on second hand information, are liable to revision in the light of new facts and should therefore be received with caution.

### *What We have Gained?*

Though it is now past history I would devote a paragraph to the objection raised by a correspondent and even voiced in suppressed tones in the press. Referring to the political part of the Pact they ask, 'What have you gained by it? The *Harijns* have surely got much more than the Prime Minister gave.' Well, that is exactly the gain. My opposition to the decision was that it gave stone instead of bread. This Pact has given bits of bread. I personally would have rejoiced with Dr. Moonje if the *Harijans* had got all the seats allotted to the Hindus. That would have been the greatest gain to caste-Hindus and Hinduism. What I wanted and what I still want is their complete merger in the caste-Hindus and the latter's in the former. It is my deliberate opinion, not likely to be altered by any fresh fact that may come to light, that the more the suppressors give to the suppressed the more they gain. They gain *pro tanto* discharge from

overdue debts. Unless caste-Hindus approach the question in that humble, penitent, religious and right spirit, the remaining part of the Pact will never be observed in the spirit that seemed to pervade Hindu society during the Fast week.

I would like to tender my congratulations to those Princes who have opened their State temples to the Harijans and have otherwise proclaimed banishment of untouchability from their States. If I may say it, they have thereby done some penance on their own behalf and their people. I hope that the Hindus residing in these States will carry out the terms of these proclamations and so fraternize with them as to make the Harijans feel that they never were the despised outcastes of Hindu humanity. We are too near the scene of tragedy to realise that this canker of untouchability has travelled far beyond its prescribed limits and has sapped the foundations of the whole nation. The touch-me-not spirit pervades the atmosphere. If therefore this white ant is touched at its source, I feel sure that we shall soon forget the differences with regard to caste and caste and religion and religion and begin to believe that even as all Hindus are one and indivisible, so are all Hindus, Mussalmans, Sikhs, Parsees, Jews and Christians, branches of the same parent tree. Though religions are many, Religion is one. That is the lesson I would have us learn from the campaign against untouchability. And we will learn it, if we prosecute it in the religious spirit with a determination that will not be resisted.

Yeravda Central Prison  
November 5, 1932.

M. K. GANDHI

A correspondent whom I know well and who is in sympathy with the movement against untouchability, though he does not accept the whole of the programme, writes a long letter in Hindi from which I condense the following :

"I fear that the campaign is not being kept within bounds in all parts of the country. I understand that in some cases those who claim to be workers in the cause are making use of questionable methods such as resorting to abuse of the adherents of the old order and pouring ridicule on sacred names. Anyone who dares to analyse your sayings or writings or who demurs to the extreme forms that the campaign is taking immediately becomes the butt of ridicule, is labelled a traitor to his religion and even threatened with dire consequences. They do not seem to care for the material or moral welfare of the outcastes. They think that their effort begins and ends with promiscuous dinners and marching crowds of Harijans to temples, even in defiance of the wishes to the contrary of the trustees. I am sure you do not want the movement to degenerate into mere spectacular demonstrations calculated merely to wound the feelings of the orthodox without doing the least service to the Harijans."

Out of nearly a hundred letters on untouchability received by me during the past month this is the first letter complaining of the workers' conduct bordering on violence. I, however, felt the necessity of giving publicity to the complaint, if only out of regard for my correspondent, as a warning to the workers. I know that he will not indulge in wilful exaggeration. There can be no compulsion in matters of religion. I should say in any matter. The public know my very strong views against violence in any shape or form against anyone, no matter what his caste or creed or nationality may be. Let those in charge of the movement therefore understand that even in their impatience to save me from the prospective fast they may not force the pace by adopting questionable methods. If they do they will merely hasten my end. It would be a living death for me to

## War On Untouchability

witness the degeneration of a movement in whose behalf, as I believe, God had prompted that little fast. The cause of *Harijans* and Hinduism will not be served by the methods of the rabble. This is perhaps the biggest religious reform movement in India, if not in the world, involving as it does the well being of nearly sixty million human beings living in serfdom. The orthodox section that disapproves of it is entitled to every courtesy and consideration. We have to win them by love, by self-sacrifice, by perfect self-restraint, by letting the purity of our lives produce its own silent effect upon their hearts. We must have faith in our truth and love converting the opponents to our way. There is no doubt whatsoever that deliverance of sixty million human beings from age-long suppression will not be brought about by mere showy demonstration. There has to be a solid constructive programme contemplating attack on all fronts. This enterprise requires the concentrated energy of thousands of men, women, boys and girls, who are actuated by the loftiest religious motives. I would therefore respectfully urge those who do not appreciate the purely religious character of the movement to retire from it. Let those who have that faith and fervour, be they few or many, work the movement. Removal of untouchability may produce, indeed it will produce, great political consequences ; but it is not a political movement. It is a movement purely and simply of purification of Hinduism, and that purification can only come through the purest instruments. Thanks be to God that there are hundreds, if not thousands, of such instruments working in all parts of India. Let the impatient sceptics watch, wait and see. But let them not mar the movement by hasty, ill-conceived interference, even though it may be prompted by laudable motives.

Yeravda Central Prison,  
November 7, 1932

M. K. GANDHI.

## Significance Of Temple Entry Issue

*In a special interview given to a representative of the Associated Press inside the Yerarda Jail Mahatma Gandhi emphasised that South India had become the storm centre and explained the reasons why the Guruvayoor question was worth the price he had expressed his determination to pay. Asked about Dr. Ambedkar's declaration that temple entry was not worth risking his life Mahatma Gandhi said :-*

• I do not take the same light view that Dr. Ambedkar does of the temple-entry question. In my opinion it is the deciding test as to whether the orthodox Hindu mind has responded to the call of the time or not and whether it is prepared to purge Hinduism of the black mark of untouchability. Nothing in my opinion will strike the imagination of the Hindu mass mind, including Harijans, as throwing open of all public temples to them precisely on the same terms as caste Hindus. I can understand Dr. Ambedkar's comparative indifference, but I am not thinking of the few cultured men belonging to the Depressed Classes. I am thinking of the uncultured, dumb many. After all Hindu temples play a most important part in the life of the masses and I, who have been trying all my life to identify myself with the most illiterate and down-trodden cannot be satisfied until all temples are open to the outcastes of the Hindu humanity. This, however, does not mean that I belittle in any shape or form the other disabilities whereunder they are labouring. I feel about them just as keenly as Dr. Ambedkar. Only I feel the evil is so deep-rooted that one must not make a choice between the different disabilities but must tackle them all at once. That is the burden of my correspondence with the Anti-Untouchability League also.

"The Guruvayoor temple has come in my way by accident. I have no option left to me. After all Kelappan is, in my opinion, one of the noblest of India's silent servants. A distinguished public career was open to him any day. He is a wellknown worker in Malabar. But he deliberately threw in his lot with the unapproachables

and the invisibles. I had the pleasure and honour of working with him at the time of the Vaikom Satyagraha. Long before that time and ever since he had been devoting himself to the uplift of suppressed humanity. As the public know, after long waiting he made a fixed determination to give his life in the attempt to have the Guruvayoor temple opened to the Harijans. I discovered, however, the flaw in his fast. I immediately pointed it out to him and, although he believed victory was within sight he nobly responded and let it slip from his hand, retraced his steps and suspended his fast. When I telegraphed to him I bound myself to fast with him, if resumption became necessary on the termination of the three months' notice he gave. I should be an unworthy servant of India and an unworthy comrade if I now flinched and abandoned Kelappan to his fate.

"But there is something more than the life of a comrade or my own personal honour. Everyone recognises that the Depressed Classes' question has to be solved now or never, not at any rate within the present generation or for several generations to come. There are thousands of men and women like me who cling to Hinduism because they believe that there is in it the amplest scope for mental, moral and spiritual expansion. This bar sinister put upon nearly 60 million<sup>1</sup> human beings is a standing demonstration against that claim. Men like me feel that untouchability is no integral part of Hinduism. It is an excrescence, but if it is found to be otherwise, if the Hindu mass mind really hugs untouchability, reformers like me have no other option but to sacrifice ourselves on the altar of our convictions. I have patiently and silently listened to the taunt that such a fast is tantamount to suicide. I do not believe it to be such. On the contrary for men with a deep religious conviction there is no other outlet for the soul than this final sacrifice, when every other effort seems perfectly hopeless.

"This campaign, therefore, in my opinion is an acid test of what I have claimed for Hinduism and I can only repeat what I

<sup>1</sup> Gandhiji afterwards corrected himself and, as he admits in the next statement, the correct number is less than 40 millions. -Editor.



said at the Round Table Conference *that Hinduism dies if untouchability lives and untouchability has to die if Hinduism is to live* and today I make bold to say that there are hundreds, if not thousands, of Indian men and women who would lay down their lives even, as Kelappen and I propose to do, to vindicate the claim for Hinduism that it is not a narrow creed or dogma but it is a living faith designed to satisfy the most exacting conscience, the deepest thinker and the godliest person."

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( 4 )

### In Reply to a Critic

A correspondent writes as follows :-

"I consider your last fast to have been a coercion of the worst type. I do not want to conceal from you my feeling about the Yeravda Pact. I know mine is shared by public men, who, because of their respect for your personality and because of your detention in the Yeravda Prison, did not like to say anything public against your action in bringing about the pact. I consider the pact to be a public misfortune which would never have been brought about but for your unfortunate fast. I know of a very esteemed friend of yours who had said that if the refusal had not meant your certain death, he would never have given his consent to the pact.

"There is a large number of thinking Hindus who regret having had to accept the pact, as they think that there would have been no necessity for it, if you had only accepted in London what you have done now.

"In a statement you have said that it was against these millions that your fast was undertaken. I take it that it was your intention, but in the actual result it was

not these millions but others who had no course left open but to suspend their judgment and feeling in the matter and agree to the terms to which nothing in the world would have made them agree, if their refusal had not meant the losing of your valued life. It was their spontaneous love that brought about transformation inside five days and brought into being the Yeravda Pact. Is this a correct statement of facts? Will it not be more correct to say that it was only in fear of your death by starvation which brought about the pact. Remembering the circumstances under which it was brought about, I think you will recognise that much need not be made of it. If the pact is not carried out in its fulness, much less would there be any justification for you to embark on a second fast. It gives me no pleasure to have to criticise a public man of your eminence, but the occasion is such that to keep quiet will not be honest. Your assumption that the masses whom you have addressed on the question of untouchability have accepted your views on that question, simply because they did not publicly oppose your views, is not correct, because out of their respect for your great personality and because of your political leadership they would hear in silence and however much they may be opposed to your views, as I know many of them are, at least in Northern India, they would still consider it their duty to give you a respectful hearing as you are aware that these people are not very vocal and they do not go out of their way to oppose the views of those who differ from them, and specially if the views are expressed by one of your eminence."

## A Great Disservice

I have removed from the letter unnecessary paragraphs and names of public men referred to by the correspondent. It would be a matter of great grief to me if the publiemen whom the correspondent mentions have suppressed their own opinions and accepted proposals which, but for the threat of my death, they would never have endorsed. If they acted as the correspondent suggests, they rendered a great disservice to the country and failed to appreciate the purely religious character of the fast. In public life one has often to perform the painful duty of sacrificing friends for the sake of truth or public weal and what was in the pact that these friends considered to be highly objectionable? Surely not the reservation of seats, nor joint electorate nor the method of nomination of candidates, by primary election as it has been called. They could not object to the resolution restoring to *Harijans* social and religious rights of which they have cruelly remained dispossessed for ages. The only thing remaining is the number of seats allotted to them but more than that was given to them by the Raja-Moonje Pact and as I have already said in a previous statement caste Hindus could never give the *Harijans* too many seats if they really believed them to be their own kith and kin whom they had hitherto kept under their heels. Sorry indeed is the outlook for them if what the pact has given them is regarded as an undeserved concession wrung from the reluctant caste Hindus by my fast. Therefore, if the information given by my correspondent turns out to be true, I would hold my fast

to be doubly justified. I should not care to live as a member of a society which is chary even of doing a small and tardy measure of justice to its outcastes who are so through no fault of their own and my fast was trebly justified if the further statement made by my correspondent is true that the millions of whom I have been writing as a matter of fact never endorsed my vehement condemnation of untouchability and that they remained silent or even signified approval purely out of their respect for my 'great personality' or my 'political leadership'.

Life in the midst of such falsity would be a burden to me. The sooner public men and people realise the necessity of resisting and asserting themselves even against the so-called Mahatma like myself the better it would be for themselves, for the country and for men like me. I should gladly fast even to have such a cleansing of the atmosphere.

### *A Timely Contribution*

My correspondent's letter is a timely contribution to the movement. Those who are in it should know the implications both of the movement and the prospective fast. I can only repeat with all the emphasis at my command that my fast is not intended to coerce anyone to act against what he may consider to be in the best interests or the society or country. My fast is not against persons whom I can name or number. It is intended imperceptibly and unconsciously to effect and agitate the millions whom I have in mind, and between whom and myself, I believe, an indissoluble bond exists.

*Not in London*

My correspondent suggests that 'there would have been no necessity for the pact if I had only accepted in London what I have done now.' I must not take up the past beyond saying that I would not have done in London what it was possible to do in India. The correspondent, although he was in London at the time, simply does not know all the facts that are in my possession.

Let not the public, however, run away with the idea that I have many letters protesting against the Pact. So far as I can remember this is the only letter of its kind. There are two or three letters complaining of coercion, but none suggesting that therefore, anything was given to the *Harijans*, that was not their due and against this one letter, I have hundreds of letters and telegrams warmly approving the fast itself and the Pact. ....

As I was handing in this statement I received a wire from the ever vigilant Secretary of the All India Anti-Untouchability League pointing out that total population of untouchables in India was not sixty millions but under forty. I am sorry for having given an incorrect figure although Sjt. Thakkar had corrected me even during the fast.

November 9, 1932.

Yeravda Central Prison,

M. K. GANDHI.

## What The Harijans Can Do ?

In this fifth statement ..... I want to summarise a part of what I said last week to Sjt. Rajbhoj and his friends ..... One of their questions related to what the Harijans could do in order to help the movement. They could do a great deal in the direction. They could anticipate the charges brought against them in justification of the refusal of some of the caste Hindus to associate with them on terms of absolute equality. I have already said in emphatic language that the caste Hindus are wholly to blame for the undoubtedly deplorable condition of the vast mass of Harijans and that improvement will follow the removal of untouchability as a matter of course. It should never be made a condition of the removal.

### *Internal Reform*

Nevertheless, it is the obvious duty of the Harijan workers to carry on internal reform to the extent it is possible even in the face of the existing state of things. The Harijan workers should therefore devote all their energy to ( 1 ) the promotion of cleanliness and hygiene among the Harijans, ( 2 ) improved methods of carrying on what are known as unclean occupations, *e. g.*, scavenging and tanning, ( 3 ) the giving up of the eating of carrion and beef, if not meat altogether, ( 4 ) giving up of intoxicating liquors, ( 5 ) inducing parents to send their children to day-schools wherever they are available and parents themselves to attend night-schools wherever such are

opened, (6) abolition of untouchability among themselves.

Let me go through the items to indicate what is meant by them. A daily bath is necessary at least in our climate, and clean clothes are necessary under all climates. I know that water is not easily available in Harijan quarters. They have, as a rule, no access to public wells and tanks and they are too poor to afford a change of clothing. It is not generally realised that even a *lota* full of water can give one a clean bath. It is taken by thoroughly wetting a clean towel and vigorously rubbing the body, including the head all over and then wiping with a dry towel. If the bath is taken daily the wet towel after wringing out all the water from it, can serve the purpose of drying the body. In this climate again the same clothes can be easily washed and dried there and then whilst one has merely the *langoti* on. ....

### *A Descent to Hell*

As to the improved method of scavenging, selfish and ignorant castemen make it well-nigh impossible to remove human remains in a decent manner. The closets, because of the untouchability, are unclean beyond description. They are dark, ill-ventilated and so constructed that only a portion is somewhat capable of being cleaned and that too under filthy conditions. To use these closets is a positive daily descent to hell. But for the beneficent climate many more thousands than already do will find an early cremation, owing to the superstitious refusal to see one's own faeces and to permit the untouchables or themselves

to clean the interior of the closet. The Harijans who have to perform a very necessary social service, can, even in the existing unfavourable circumstances, at least, have their bath immediately after the cleaning is done and use plenty of dry earth for cleaning instead of just the little straw that they use. Being an expert scavenger, which I claim to be, I could show many very cheap, efficient and thoroughly clean methods of performing this service. But I cannot deal with this interesting subject in this cursory statement. The curious may look up my writings on sanitation in general and village sanitation in particular. ....

### *Tanning*

Clean tanning is a far more difficult proposition. Our owners do not know the modern method of skinning carcasses nor of tanning--tanning I have here used in a comprehensive sense.....

The whole of the process from the carrying of the carcass to the dressing of the hide is done in a crude manner, resulting in the loss to the country of untold wealth and the production of inferior hide. .... Harijan workers can learn the modern method and acquaint the tanners with it in so far as it is practicable.

The scavengers should be taught resolutely not to accept the remains of the house-holders' daily food which is virtually thrown at them in the cruelest manner possible. Years of habit have dulled the aesthetic sense of the scavengers and they see nothing wrong in eating the remains of another man's dishes. They crave after what



regard as dainties from their employers' dishes. I have known *Bhangish* having removed their children from schools because the latter were taught not to touch these leavings and be satisfied with the *juwari* or the *bajari* bread baked in their homes.

### *Carriion-Eating*

Tanners should be induced to give carrion and beef. As a vegetarian, I would like Harijans to give up, as many have done, meat altogether. But if they are not ready for this reform, they should be taught to give up carrion as being unhygienic, besides being taboo by the rest of mankind and beef as being forbidden in Hinduism. ....

Whatever the difficulty, carrion and beef-eating must be given up. That one self-restraint will at once raise the Harijans in the estimation of the caste-men and make the task of caste reformers comparatively easy in the campaign against untouchability.

Items 4 and 5 do not call for any remarks. They are self-explained.

### *Untouchability Among Untouchables*

The last item is abolition of untouchability among the untouchables themselves. This is an urgent need. The removal of untouchability will become most difficult, if this double untouchability is not removed with one sweep. It is an uphill task for the Harijan reformers, but if they will realise that this movement is predominantly religious and designed to purge Hinduism of the uncleanness that

has crept into it, they will have the necessary courage and self-confidence to carry out the great reform. It is needless for me to stress the point that the workers in such a movement must be selfless and pure in character.

I have given here a constructive programme that should satisfy the most ambitious reformer among Harijans and occupy the whole of his time and energy. But there are one or two things he and the Harijans may not do during this period of grace at any rate. No Harijan need fast against any one, nor need *satyagraha* be offered by them. Let them watch the caste Hindus who are on their trial and see what they do to remove the bar that separates the Harijans from them. Let them not engage in quarrels with local caste Hindus. Their behaviour should be at all times courteous and dignified, much more so at this time.

Religion can only be vindicated by self-suffering, never by violence done to the oppressors. Though there may be many things they may get by force, their credit will lie in getting their rights by the conversion of caste Hindus, and today they have ample reason for deriving hope from the knowledge that there are tens of thousands of caste Hindus who have a lively sense of their guilt and are straining every nerve to do reparation to Harijans. Let them have perfect confidence in the absolute justice of their cause and in the ability of self-suffering to win it. ....

Yerarda Central Prison

November 14, 1932.

M. K. GANDHI

## What Caste Hindus Can Do ?

If among the Harijans Sjt. Rajbhoj has yet been the only one to have asked me as to what Harijans might do to advance the movement, I have scores of letters from all parts of India from caste Hindus, both men and women, students and others, inquiring in what way they can help without interfering with their other pre-occupations and since anti-untouchability movement, as applied to the masses, is one merely of a change of heart, a changing of their attitude towards Harijans, the vast majority of caste Hindus do not need to interrupt their daily activities in order to serve the Harijans.

### *Implications of Removal of Untouchability*

The first thing is for everyone to understand the implications of the removal of untouchability in his or her own life, and if the answer is that he or she has not only no objection to it, but is desirous of seeing them entering public temples, using public places, such as schools, *sarais*, roads, hospitals, dispensaries and the like, in short, the Harijans being put precisely on the same footing as themselves, religiously, socially, economically and politically, he or she has personally taken the full step. But that is not all that the questioners want or all that they should be satisfied with. Having gone so far, they want to know what more they can do in furtherance of the cause. Such inquirers need not extend their activities beyond their immediate neighbourhood.

### *Work among caste Hindus*

Let them canvass the opinion of those with whom they come in daily contact, and if the former are not convinced of the necessity of removal of untouchability they should, if they have critically studied the movement, endeavour to convince their neighbours, or if they are not competent they should procure the necessary literature, supply them with it and put them in touch with those full-time workers who are specially qualified for such propaganda work. If they find that their neighbourhood is not touched by the spirit of the movement and if they have any influence, they should arrange public lectures, demonstrations and invite speakers to such meetings. So much for the work amongst the caste Hindus.

### *Caste Hindus' Duty*

But the real work that this large body of men and women can do is undoubtedly among the Harijans. Those caste Hindus who have studied my fifth statement, could not fail to have noticed that there is a vast amount of silent and effective service to be rendered by caste Hindus without much expenditure of time, energy or money. The caste Hindus can effectively supplement the effort of Harijan workers in inculcating habits of cleanliness and by procuring facilities for having easy access to the required water-supply. They can find out public wells and tanks situated near Harijan quarters and canvass the opinion of caste Hindus who may be using such wells or tanks, pointing out to them that Harijans have a legal right to the use of all such public services and they can at the

## The Bleeding Wound

same time see to it that when the consent of caste Hindus has been secured for the use by the Harijans of these services, the latter use them in a manner not offensive to the former.

### *Scavenging*

As to scavenging, they can visit the owners of houses served by Harijans in their neighbourhood and explain to them the necessity of making it easy for Harijans to do the cleaning work in a hygienic manner. To this end, it would be naturally necessary for them to study the scientific method of constructing closets and disposing of nightsoil. They can also procure from the householders special dresses to be supplied to the scavengers and make the Harijans feel, by unhesitatingly doing the scavenging themselves, that there is nothing low or undignified about rendering such service. Such workers should also carry on propaganda against castemen giving to their scavengers leavings from their daily food and, where they are ill-paid, persuading the employers to pay them a decent wage.

### *Tanning*

As to tanning, not much help can be rendered unless some one of such voluntary leisure-time workers, has humanity and enthusiasm enough to study the hygienic method of skinning a carcass and, having done so, will spread the knowledge among these tanners. They certainly can do one thing. They can find out the custom about the disposal of such carcasses and see that the tanners are assured of a proper wage for the service they render.

Those who have capacity and time can conduct day or night schools, take the Harijan children for picnics and sights-seeing on holidays or whenever the opportunity occurs and visit the Harijans in their own homes, procure medical aid where necessary and generally let them feel that a new page has been opened in their lives and that they need no longer regard themselves as the neglected and despised portion of Hindu humanity.

*What Students Can Do ?*

All that I have described can be most easily and efficiently done by the student world. If this work is done with silent zeal, determination and intelligence by a large body of men and women, I have no doubt that we shall have taken many steps in our progress towards the goal and it would be found too that there are more things than I have described that require attention. I have but chosen a few of the many things that have come under my observations in the course of my journeyings.

Yeravda Central Prison,  
November 15, 1932

M. K. GANDHI

( 7 )

**Duty of Uplifting the Harijans**

*( Extracts taken from the Seventh Statement )*

Though the questions that I shall endeavour to answer in this statement have been more or less covered by the previous statements, yet as they continue to recur, I thought it would be well to collect as many as possible and deal with them in one single statement.

"Are you not forcing the people to do things against their will?" is one such question. At least such is not my:

intention. The contemplated fast is intended to strengthen the weak, to energise the sluggards, to give faith to the sceptics. It should be clear to any one who will give a little thought to it that those who are hostile to the reform, will not only be unaffected by the fast but will probably, and perhaps rightly, from their own standpoint, welcome it if only it ends fatally. ....

Whatever the unintended consequences of the contemplated fast may be, apart from its being a question of honour, it must be taken up if the occasion arises for the additional reason that it is certain to stir to worthy effort tens of thousands of people who have faith in me. Such must be the case in every movement of a religious character.

### *Opposition Inevitable*

'The second question is : "are you not setting one section of Hindus against another ?" Most emphatically not. Some opposition is inevitable in every reform. But up to a point, opposition and agitation in a society are a sign of healthy growth. ....

Almost every letter that I have recieved from Sanatanits makes these startling admissions:

(1) 'We admit that there is much to be done for the amelioration of the condition of the Harijans,'

(2) 'We admit that many caste Hindus are ill-treating the Harijans,'

(3) 'We admit that their children should receive education, that they should have better quarters to live in,'

(4) 'We admit that they should have proper arrangements for bathing and drawing water for themselves,'

(5) 'We admit that they should have full political rights,'

(6) 'We admit that they should have temple facilities for worship,' and

(7) 'We admit that they should have all the civic rights that the others have. But we must not be compelled to touch them or associate with them especially whilst they are in their present condition.'

"Then, I say to them, since you admit the necessity for putting them on the same level with you, why are you agitated that other caste Hindus will go a step further and believe on the strength of the same *Shastras*, that you believe in, that it is their duty not to regard the Harijans as untouchables but to have them, and share with themselves all those rights and privileges which you concede to them, but which you would have them to enjoy and exercise in isolation from you. . . . .

### *Funds for the Campaign*

"I venture to suggest a better way. Since you are at one with the reformers in conceding the desirability of ameliorating the condition of the Harijans and since you have not hitherto done anything tangible in that direction, subscribe liberally to the funds that the reformers are collecting and use them as your agents for carrying out the common scheme and respect their interpretation of Hindu religion as you would have them to respect yours. . . . .

### *Use of Temples*

One difficulty is still standing in the way. Who is to have the use of public temples and other public institutions that are in existence and from which Harijans



are at present debarred, in some cases legally and in others, far more numerous, illegally ? The Sanatanists or the reformers together with the Harijans ? There is a very simple way out of the difficulty if only each party will shed anger and mutual disrespect. A referendum can easily be taken for each village or a group of villages and each city or each division of a city and whichever party has the majority in favour of its view, should make use of the public institutions, including temples. And if the Sanatanists carry the majority with them, they should defray their share with the reformers of the cost of providing equal services for the reformers and the untouchables.

"I bracket the reformers with the Harijans, for if they are worth their salt and will work up to their conviction as time progresses, the duty must dawn upon them of denying to themselves the use of a single service which the Harijans cannot enjoy with caste Hindus on absolutely equal terms. . . . .

*"Let them clearly understand that the removal of untouchability in accordance with the Yeravda Pact and, with the declaration of the recently formed All-India Anti-Untouchability League includes no more than I have narrated. It does not include inter-dining and inter-marriage. That many Hindus including myself would go much further, ought not to disturb the Sanatanists. They will not want to stifle private judgment on private action. . . . .*

"If a particular reform has inherent vitality and has come in response to the needs of the time no power on earth can stem its irresistible march. . . . .

Yeravda Central Prison

November 16, 1932.

M. K. GANDHI

## The Meaning of Shastras

Here is another question that many correspondents have asked:

'You say, you believe in the *shastras*. We do not understand what you mean by them, for you seem arbitrarily to reject many things which are supported by the *shastras*, even the Gita that you swear by, requires one to follow the *shastras*'.

I must repeat what I have said in a previous statement, that for me nothing that is inconsistent with the main theme of the Gita is *shastras*, no matter where it is found or printed. If I do not shock my orthodox friends, I would like to make my meaning clearer still. Nothing that is inconsistent with the universally accepted first principles of morality has for me the authority of *shastras*. They are designed not to supersede but to sustain the first principles and for me Gita is all-sufficing because it not only conforms to the first principles, but it gives you solid reason for adherence to them at any cost. But for this golden rule that I have suggested, laymen like me would flounder in the midst of a forest of conflicting texts and a pile of nicely printed and equally nicely bound Sanskrit volumes, for which rival *pandits* claim divine authority. Thus there are many *smritis*, some of which are unknown outside the little area in which, by a few hundred men, they are held in veneration. No one can give their origin or the dates of their composition. I saw one such volume in the South. When I inquired of learned scholarly friends about this volume, they told me they had no knowledge of it.

### Contradictory Teachings

There are numerous *Agamas* which when examined, contradict one another and which have no binding effect outside the little areas where they find acceptance. If all these books are to be held as binding on Hindus, there is hardly an immoral practice for which it would be difficult to find *shastric* sanction and even in the hoary *Manu Smriti* from which, if verses of doubtful authenticity are not expurgated, one would discover several texts contradicting

~~The~~ loftiest moral teachings to be found spread throughout that great book.

Therefore the meaning I have given to the word *shastra* in the Bhagwad Gita, wherein it occurs only in one context, is not any book or set of laws outside the Gita itself but it means right conduct embodied in a living authority. I know that this is not likely to satisfy the critic and, as a layman, I can give no lead to anybody but I can satisfy the curiosity of my critics by telling them what I mean exactly by *shastra*.

### *Meaning of Divine Guidance*

Another question put with equal persistence is this: 'What do you mean by divine guidance or the inner voice and how would you and, for that matter, the world fare if every one claimed such guidance for himself and each acted in a manner wholly different from his neighbours ?'

This a fair question and we would come to a pretty pass if Divinity had made no provision by way of self-protection. Whilst therefore, all may lay the claim, some alone will be able to justify it. A person falsely claiming to act under divine inspiration or the promptings of the inner voice, without having any such, will fare worse than the one falsely claiming to act under the authority of an earthly sovereign. Whereas the latter, on being exposed, will escape with injury to his body, the former may perish body and soul together. Charitable critics impute no fraud to me but suggest that I am highly likely to be acting under a hallucination. The result for me even then will not be far different from what it would be if I was laying a false claim. A humble seeker that I claim to be, has need to be most cautious and to preserve balance of mind. He has to reduce himself to zero before God will guide him. Let me not labour this point. The claim I have made is neither extraordinary nor exclusive. God will rule the lives of all those who will surrender themselves without reservation to Him. In the language of the Gita God acts through those who have acquired complete detachment i.e., self-effacement. Here there is no question of hallucination. I

## War On Untouchability

have stated in a simple scientific truth to be tested by all who have the will and patience to acquire the necessary qualifications, which are again incredibly simple to understand and easy enough to acquire, where there is determination.

### *Appeal to Reason*

Lastly no one need worry about my claim. What I am asking the people to do is capable of being verified by reason. Even when I disappear from the scene, untouchability will have to be removed. Whether the fast is divinely inspired or not need not be a matter of concern even to my closest associates. They may, out of affection for me, work with double zeal in the cause. That would be no calamity even if it was found that the fast was the foolish act of a self-willed friend. Those who have neither affection for, nor faith in, me will remain unmoved by it. Constant harping, therefore, on the contemplated fast, or my claim in regard thereto, is calculated to befog the public mind and (divert) attention from the great work before the nation. I would, therefore, conclude this statement by drawing the readers' attention to a few pictures<sup>1</sup> that I have picked up from the voluminous correspondence in my possession.....

### *The Work Before Us*

*Now I wish that, instead of engaging in fruitless controversy about what is and what is not contained in the Shastras about untouchability every one of us would apply ourselves to amelioration of the wretched condition of the so-called untouchables. There is work enough and to spare for all my learned correspondents, who almost without exception have assured me that they yield to no one in their desire to better their (untouchables') material and moral condition.*

Yeravda Central Prison,  
November 17, 1932

M. K. GANDHI

<sup>1</sup> Omitted in this collection-Editor.

## APPENDIX J.

# A RETROSPECTION

Since 20th October, when Gandhiji, the greatest and most revered of our countrymen, embarked on his holy 'fast unto death', in the name of God, there has been quick work and the wide awakening has released tremendous zeal and energy. Thousands of meetings have been held, in every part and almost in every corner of the land, including far-off villages, expressing the sympathy with, and support to, the movement. Almost in all these meetings touchables mixed with the untouchables easily and freely.

And again, hundreds of temples have been declared open to the Harijans without any conditions whatsoever. A decade before this was inthinkable. With what tremendous pace the times are changing! Even a few years before, when that indefatigable worker for the cause of the Harijans, and the trusted lieutenant of Gandhiji, Syt. Jammalal Bajaj, started work in this direction, he, inspite of his irrepressible optimism, could not succeed beyond a tardy limit. Gandhiji's fast touched the most tender aspect of Hindu heart and quickened its feeling for our Depressed and Supressed brethren.



So far as I am aware more than 1500 temples have been declared open to the Harijans in different parts of

